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argosy

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ALBERTO MORAVIA

Overtaking

YOU can't have two passions at the same time. My passion for the car which I had at last succeeded in buying, distracted me, at that moment, from my passion for Ines, the girl to whom I was thinking of getting engaged. So much so that Tullio, my great friend, insinuated himself between Ines and me and tried to entice her away from me. Friends, friends—well, it's better not to say anything on that subject. And if it's absolutely necessary to say something, then we're forced to admit that friendship is a fine and splendid thing as long as there's no woman involved. You've only to look at a hen-coop; two cocks will peck at their food together, will crow together, will sleep together; but as soon as you introduce a hen, a hen in the prime of life, one of those white ones with a little red crest—the two cocks will go for each other and peck each other's eyes out.

You can't understand why you love someone. This happened to me with Ines until I bought the car; once I had bought the car, it started happening to me with *that*. Certain things, of course, go without saying: Ines was made of flesh and bone, the car of pig-iron; Ines had a pretty, round face, with soft black eyes and a smiling mouth, the car a snout with bumpers looking like the teeth of a mastiff; Ines, although small, had a well-trimmed figure from top to toe, while the car was like all other cars, just a big packing-case; and yet, little by little, the thought of the car ousted the thought of Ines. If at least I had been satisfied with thinking about it! The trouble was that I talked about it: and other people noticed this more than I imagined.

Tullio said to me one day, in the presence of Ines, "Why, Gigi, all you think about now is the car. If I were in your place, Ines, I should be jealous."

Then Ines said, smiling, "Shut your eyes, Gigi, and tell me what you see: two legs or four wheels?"

Of course I answered, "Two legs," but to tell the truth I was lying; I had seen four wheels, four lovely wheels with new tyres which, as I knew, were awaiting me at the corner of the street to carry me wherever I wished.

Well, one morning—it was a Sunday—I telephoned to tell Ines

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I would fetch her to go to the seaside; I hinted I wanted to be alone with her. I wanted to talk to her about our engagement.

Feeling gay and contented, I went down to the garage underneath where I live, took out my beautiful grey-and-blue car and went, in the first place, to the big garage at the corner of Via Candia, where I asked them to give me a complete servicing: petrol, water, oil, tyres, even distilled water for the battery, as well as cleaning the windscreen. Then I got in again, went into bottom gear, then into second, then third, and finally went up the whole of Viale Giulio Cesare in top: it was wonderful. The car didn't merely move, it positively drank up the street; and the engine made an amorous sort of humming sound like bees in a flowery meadow in springtime. But, when I turned into Piazza della Libertà, I saw from afar that Ines was not alone.

This upset me, especially because I had warned her that I wanted to be alone with her; and I was all the more upset when I saw that the other person was Tullio. I already knew that Tullio, my friend and partner in my car-accessories business, had his eye on Ines; and his presence that morning was a confirmation of this. I must add that, of the two of us, Tullio was the strong, handsome one: he was tall, with broad shoulders and a small head well set on a neck like a bull's. I myself, on the other hand, being short and pinched-looking, had only my eyes, my intense, intelligent eyes, to remind people that strength, after all, isn't the only thing in the world. I noticed with distaste that Tullio was wearing a red-and-blue striped sweater and bright blue sailor trousers; he was looking more of a tough than usual.

When I came abreast of them, I stopped the car, opened the door and said dryly, "Hullo, Tullio."

Ines explained gaily, "Tullio telephoned me and so I told him to come along too."

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Tullio said impudently, "It doesn't matter to you, does it? The only thing you mind about is driving the car, isn't it?" Imprudent words, which at once turned to poison inside me.

Feigning stupidity, I replied, "Why, of course. The thing I mind about is the car, nothing else counts. Come on, jump in." So they got in, Ines into the back seat, Tullio beside me. This arrangement, at first, pleased me; but very soon afterwards I realised I had nothing to be happy about.

Tullio, in fact, immediately turned round towards Ines, and she leaned forward towards Tullio; and in this way, while I was taken up with driving, they embarked upon an intimate conversation, just like a pair of lovers, or two people who are on the way to becoming lovers. What did they say? Oh well, a bit of everything—jokes, allusions, compliments, hints, half-sentences, phrases left in the air. What disgusted me most, however, was the tone—excited, insinuating, sly, like that of two people who have an understanding between them and, because of this secret understanding, little does it matter what they say.

By this time we were out of Rome and driving along the Via Aurelia. Our idea was to go to Santa Marinella, and as it was already getting late I quickened speed. To say I quickened speed, however, is merely a manner of speaking. Along the whole length of the road one car followed another: big cars and little cars, Italian cars and foreign cars, luxurious cars and utility cars. Every now and then there was a milk van, or a big lorry from one of the seaside resorts driven by a madman who overtook other cars as though he were riding a motor bicycle. So I settled down to a slow, steady pace, and I might perhaps have gone on like that if those other two, close beside me, had not got on my nerves with their chattering.

Somehow or other, I don't know why, the nervousness of jealousy infected my driving and I started to accelerate, with the idea, perhaps, of getting as quickly as possible to Santa Marinella and so interrupting their altogether too confidential conversation. I therefore began overtaking other cars, one after another, like pearls on a string. At the insistent sounding of my horn there were some that immediately drew in to the side, well-behaved cars that observed the rules of the road; but there were also cars that wouldn't allow themselves to be overtaken at any price.

One thing I noticed: the best-mannered cars were the most powerful ones, the big, luxurious cars driven by people who didn't care a damn about being overtaken, knowing perfectly well that, if they wanted to, they could go faster than anybody; the meanest ones were the small, cheap cars, full of women and children, with the father of the family at the wheel. These

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unfortunates, having spent the whole week sitting in an armchair, were anxious to prove to their wives and children that they were vigorous, dashing sportsmen; and so, just at the moment when they were being overtaken, instead of slowing down and drawing in to the side, they would accelerate.

I could have killed them; all the more so because, while with solemn, set, imperturbable faces they urged on their little hire-purchase cars to the maximum speed, their whole families would be peering at me through the windows with mocking, triumphant expressions, as much as to say, " We've got the better of you. Papa's a cleverer driver than you are." I looked back at them and wondered why it was that faces which, if I had seen them in a shop or the street would have appeared uninteresting or even possibly attractive, seemed to me so completely odious when seen through the windows of a car. Meanwhile we had passed the turning to Fregene and were going towards Ladispoli.

Apart from Ines' and Tullio's chattering and the objectionable faces of the families on their Sunday outing, there was another thing that got on my nerves—the way in which Tullio, from time to time interrupted his flirtation with Ines in order to urge me, out of the kindness of his heart, to overtake a car in front.

" Now, Gigi," he would say, " do please pass that little car; " or, " Come on, give it him! Get past him—what are you waiting for? " or again, " Get on, what are you afraid of? Go into top and overtake him." Had we been alone, well and good: it's fun, sometimes, to have a race. But Ines was there; and nothing could get it out of my head that Tullio was pressing me to do all this overtaking in order to keep me occupied and distract my attention so that he could have it all his own way with her. And with a touch of ridicule, perhaps, into the bargain. Rather like a pair of lovers in a public garden saying to an importunate child, " Now come on, be a good boy and go and play ball."

I lost my temper; instead of slowing down and driving quietly as I should have done, I felt myself so carried away by anger that I followed his promptings and overtook one car after another; and the more I did so, the more infuriated I became at the thought that I was thus playing into the hands of Tullio, who looked on me as a mere trifler who had only to get his hand on the steering-wheel to allow his girl to be pinched from him.

But I kept my eye on them. Tullio was twisted right round in his seat, with one leg bent back on the cushion and his two hands gripping the back of the seat; Ines was bending forward towards him, and she too kept her hand on the back of the seat, although there was no need for it. At a certain moment, without drawing attention to what I was doing, I adjusted the driving-mirror in

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such a way that I no longer saw the road behind me, but could see that part of the seat on which their hands were resting.

After a short time I thus saw Tullio's hand sliding very slowly along until it was close to Ines' hand, which soon, at a bend in the road, it covered. At the same moment Tullio said to me, "Come on, Gigi, do please pass that little car; what are you waiting for?"

I looked at the road. The car Tullio was talking about was close in front of me and going fast. It was an old rattletrap with a baby's pram tied on to its roof. Inside it could be seen the usual swarm of women and children; and in the driver's seat the usual paterfamilias, fat and square, his big head sunk into his neck, his black, hairy hands gripping the wheel: he looked like a puppet. But when I took my eyes off Tullio's and Ines' hands and looked at the rattletrap in front, the first thing I saw was not the driver, but, at the rear window, the face of a little boy of about six, ugly, pale, with fanlike ears, making rude faces and putting out his tongue at me.

The child was making faces at me because he thought I had lost my temper at being outdistanced by his father; but I, for some reason, thought he was making faces in order to mock me about Tullio and Ines. I looked at him and frowned; and he, his mother's arm round his chest, and his nose flattened against the glass of the window, looked back at me and again put out his tongue.

I raised my eyes again to the driving-mirror and saw that Tullio's hand was now moving from Ines' hand to her wrist and then from her wrist to her arm.

Tullio said to me hypocritically, "What's the matter, are you dreaming? Why don't you accelerate?"

Ines, her voice softened by sensual excitement, supported him. "We're going too slowly," she said. "We shall never get to Santa Marinella at this rate."

"Oh really?" I replied. "I'm not going fast enough? Well, now you shall see . . ."

We were on a straight stretch of road which ended in the distance in a hill. On the right there was a hedge along the top of a bank, on the left a row of plane trees leaning towards the road, their trunks circled with bands of white. I changed into third, pressed hard down on the accelerator, sounded my horn and dashed forward, still hooting, with a powerful roar from the engine. But would you believe it? Instead of moving over to the right, as he should have done, paterfamilias, at the sound of my horn, planted himself in the middle of the road and accelerated too.

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I was thus forced to follow close behind him; Tullio said, "What on earth are you doing? Aren't you ashamed?" Then I looked up and saw the little boy putting out his tongue at me.

I threw myself over to the left of the road again and, still sounding my horn, started moving along side by side with the other car. We were almost at the end of the straight stretch where the road started climbing the hill; paterfamilias was accelerating. I couldn't get the better of him and I was bursting with rage; then, all of a sudden, I began to gain ground. But just at that very moment there appeared, at a bend in the road, another car coming towards me at a moderate speed but still fast enough to prevent me from finally overtaking the first car. I ought to have given up the attempt and fallen back again; but some devil or other whispered to me to go on. Paterfamilias accelerated at the same moment, and I had only just time to hurl myself right over to the left, into the ditch, to avoid a collision.

I saw the trunk of a plane tree rushing to meet me. I thought I heard Tullio's voice shouting, "Brake, brake!" Then I was conscious of nothing more.

Useless to relate what happened afterwards: if you get hold of that Monday's paper you'll find all the details. All I want to say is that I myself was the only one to come off lightly. But Tullio broke a leg and was two months in hospital, where I went to see him almost every day. As for Ines, she had a fractured arm—that same arm that she had so submissively surrendered to Tullio's caresses—and she carried it in a sling for over a month. And the car—well, it's better not to talk about it; one of these days I shall sell it as scrap-iron.

But do you know what Dr. Frontini, a bright young man who was looking after Tullio, said to me when I told him the exact story of how the accident had happened? "In your subconscious," he said, "you wanted to destroy the car that prevented you from loving Ines, you wanted to kill your friend out of jealousy, to kill yourself from despair at being no longer loved, and to punish your girlfriend for being unfaithful to you. In part, you succeeded."

"But I should like to know," I asked, "what this subconscious is?"

"It's what we don't know about ourselves," he replied.

"That's as may be," I said; "but I wanted to overtake a car and I didn't succeed, that's all."

However, since the accident I've given up driving, and I've got engaged to Ines. And Tullio? Tullio and I are friends again as we were before.

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Black Bartholomew

the first of a series

By ELIZABETH LEMARCHAND

YOUR father says that you can write beautiful ornamental script."

"Paternal pride grossly overstating the case, Rector."

They stood in the vestry contemplating a framed, discoloured list of the previous incumbents of the parish of Combehead St. Andrew. Stephanie Blandford scrutinised it closely and ran a hand through her tawny curls.

"I only took up lettering at school because I couldn't draw," she went on. "We all had to spend a couple of hours a week in the studio: they thought it liberated our repressions. I say, this is pretty far gone, isn't it? Completely illegible in places, and there seems to be a blank in 1662. How extraordinary to know the date of institution and not the man's name! It's usually the other way round. Is there an accurate list anywhere?"

"Yes, there is. I have compiled it myself in a series of visits to the Diocesan Registry. It's complete—no gap. The ink must have faded."

"Funny. It looks as though nothing had ever been written there. But I'll certainly have a go if you like, Rector. The result could hardly be more depressing than this, could it?" She raised one eyebrow and grinned at him.

Not for the first time John Carruthers thought what an attractive face Stephanie had. Not beautiful in the strict sense, but most intelligent and sensitive, and humorous, too. And the lovely colouring that so often went with red hair. He smiled back at her.

"You know very well that it will be an enormous improvement, my dear. What about the materials?"

They went through the church and out into the summer

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argosy discovers A NEW WRITER
with an uncanny flair for a story

afternoon, discussing the relative merits of vellum and parchment. This matter being settled, the conversation turned to Stephanie's reading. She held a major scholarship at Cambridge, and had just taken a First in Part I of the History Tripos. Her eye was firmly fixed on a Fellowship.

" Are you really sure you can spare the time for this job? " he asked, as they reached her garden gate.

" Certain. Doing something with the hands is the best medium for thinking that I know. And if this list isn't history, I don't know what is."

He handed her the frame and opened the gate of Town Cottage, three small granite cottages converted into a house of great charm by Stephanie's architect father. Mr. Blandford had added a detached garden-room where he could work on occasion away from the interruptions of his office in Exeter. Here Stephanie deposited the frame and went into the house to write to a firm of ink manufacturers.

The parish of Combehead St. Andrew lay deep in rural Devon, and more than a week went by before Stephanie had assembled all the necessary materials and could begin to tackle the list of Rectors. It was August, and day glided imperceptibly into day in a sequence of tennis, picnics, idling under the old oak in the garden, and long hours of reading. From time to time her thoughts turned to the past history of the parish . . . If I could only know the full significance of that list in terms of personalities and periods, she mused.

At last she had all that was necessary for the work, and after tea she went over to the garden-room through the heat and stillness of the late afternoon, carrying the sheet of vellum and her lettering pens. It felt hot and airless inside, and she flung open the casement window which overlooked the garden and the path from the front gate.

Picking up the frame, she removed the back with the help of a screwdriver, wrinkling her nose at the clammy feel and musty smell of the old vellum. There were two lines of very small handwriting near the bottom right-hand corner of the back of the sheet. Intrigued, she took a magnifying-glass of her father's from a drawer. The writing was cramped and rather shaky,

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apparently that of an elderly hand: *Wiser far to leave this space blank. A warning. M.W.*

Stephanie became simultaneously conscious of the silence around her and of an unpleasant, tingling sensation at the base of her spine. In response to a sudden link-up in her mind, she turned over the vellum and held it up to the light. As she expected, the position of the handwriting coincided with that of the empty space dated 1662, Aug. 2. The names were arranged in two columns, the one on the right being little more than half full. The last entry was of an institution on 30th June 1900, over half a century ago.

No hope of contacting M.W., she thought. But the Rector had said categorically that there was a complete record, so some name should be occupying the empty space in 1662 . . . Too late for a Cromwellian intruder, of course . . .

She reached for the foolscap envelope containing John Carruthers' typed list.

1647, Dec. 12 Master Antoni Kingswelle

1662, Aug. 2 Oliver Pym

1663, May 30 Sir John Winscombe

Oliver Pym. One could hardly have thought of a more uncompromisingly Roundhead and Puritan name for a Restoration appointment to a benefice. In 1662, St. Bartholomew's Day, the 24th August had been Black Bartholomew for two thousand Puritan ministers who had resigned their livings rather than use the Book of Common Prayer which on that day had become obligatory following the restoration of King and Church. Still the Puritan name was nothing to go by. So many families had their reactionaries as well as their conformists.

She settled down to work, at first half conscious of a faint sense of unease, but she quickly became absorbed in the satisfaction of accurate measuring and calculating, the necessary preliminary to ruling out the vellum. Her hands moved swiftly and competently, and she murmured numbers half aloud as she jotted them down. She enjoyed this kind of work and did it well. It was, therefore, with astonishment that she found her sum total of the spaces required short of the overall measurement by an inch. An arithmetical check failed to reveal a slip, and with some irritation at the delay she began the measurements again. Out of the corner of her eye she caught a glimpse of a figure in black on the garden path, and hastily moved out of sight, intent on getting on with her work uninterrupted by an interested visit from John Carruthers. Five minutes later she found herself confronted with precisely the same result as before.

Swearing with some fluency under her breath, Stephanie

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forced herself to consider the problem objectively. She must, somehow, be making the same idiotic mistake over and over again. It must be in the total number of name-spaces, as an inch was allotted to each. Seizing the original list she made a third attempt, and with a sigh of relief arrived at totals which agreed. It was infuriating to have wasted so much time. She began at once to rule in the framework of faint lines which would ensure the absolutely symmetrical spacing of the entries.

Better to leave it at that for tonight, she thought, laying down pencil and ruler. "It's nearly suppertime. I'll start fresh on the actual lettering tomorrow morning in really good light." She tidied her papers and implements, shut the window, and closing the door behind her went over to the house.

As the meal progressed Stephanie suddenly remembered the clerical figure on the path.

"What did J.C. want? I'm afraid I hid. I didn't want him to come over and chat and hold me up."

"J.C.?" Mrs. Blandford looked at her in surprise. "He hasn't been in this evening—as far as I know, at least."

"But, Mummy, I saw him from the garden-room window, making for the front door. About six-ish."

"You couldn't have, darling," put in her father. "I got home early, by half past five, in fact, and I've been gardening ever since. I had a crack with old Thornton over the gate, but no one has been in."

"Barmy!" succinctly remarked Henry, her younger brother. "The brainy ones often go like that, don't they, Dad? Hallucinations and whatnot."

During the lively exchanges that followed, a part of Stephanie's mind was experiencing once again an unpleasant sense of uneasiness. This was abruptly and sharply increased by her suddenly remembering that her third—and successful—attempt at measurement had been of the right-hand column of names, not, like the two earlier ones, of the left-hand column containing the empty space and M.W.'s warning. Coincidence, of course . . . But then there was this incredible business of the figure in the garden. She projected herself into an imaginary witness-box, confronted by an eminent Q.C. Could she swear to the black figure with absolute certainty? Come to that, could one ever be absolutely certain about a visual experience of that kind? And yet . . .

"I'm getting the whole damn thing on the brain," she told herself. "I must snap out of it. One knows there's a rational explanation for everything—or will be, when psychologists and psychic research people know more."

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Aloud, she announced her intention of washing up with Henry's help, and bustled him, loudly protesting, into the kitchen.

By the time that she went over to the garden-room on the following morning, Stephanie had succeeded in relegating the unexplained events of the evening before to this category of the odd but potentially explainable, and she was looking forward to the work ahead of her. The scene which greeted her as she opened the door came, therefore, as an unexpected and disturbing shock. The papers which she had left neatly stacked on the table were strewn over the floor, to the right of the overturned chair. The disposition of the various objects was startlingly expressive. Someone had sat in the chair, looking through her papers and flinging them one by one to the ground. The Rector's typed list, out of its envelope, lay in the farthest corner. The position of the chair, lying on its back, spoke unmistakably of a hasty uprising due to some strong emotion such as anger or fear.

She stood for some time leaning against the doorpost, thoughts racing through her mind, and experienced successively incredulity, fear, and finally a rising sense of excitement.

I must be *in* history, she thought, not just looking back at it. It must be some sort of fourth dimension business, like *Berkeley Square*. I am going on. Thanks, M.W., all the same.

Picking up the paper and carefully blowing the dust off the vellum she sat down at the table, prepared her pens, and began to write.

Incumbents of the Parish of Combehead St. Andrew, Devon

The lovely curving script of the heading and its ornamentations flowed from her pen, graceful and legible. Her hand moved slowly over the surface, flexible and relaxed, apparently unaffected by the taut alertness of her mind. Almost subconsciously she checked and accepted the intermittent sounds of everyday life which floated in through the open window and door: Henry's step on the path and his characteristic leaving of the front gate to swing to with a click; the hens; fragments of conversation between her mother and Mrs. Steer who came to help in the mornings; the clatter of dishes in the kitchen.

Many times afterwards Stephanie wondered why she had assumed that the first assault upon her purpose would take the form of sound. She worked on steadily, finishing the heading. Then, as her hand went out for the finer pen, it froze into immobility: a watcher stood behind her chair. The scrutiny was frightening, full of menace, wariness, and a purpose which awaited a foreseen moment with a predetermined course of

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action. All this Stephanie knew intuitively. She also knew that while to look over her shoulder was unthinkable, surrender of her purpose was equally so. Her fingers found the pen and, hardly knowing what she did, she began to inscribe the date of the institution of Robert, first Rector of the parish.

The situation slowly developed the familiar sensations of nightmare. She felt the paralysis of the limbs as the pursuer draws ever nearer and nearer. The paralysing agent was the will of another, struggling to wear down her own, to stay her hand, to prevent her from ever reaching that year and that name. The pen in her hand became a leaden staff, the distance between the vellum and the indian ink a journey in space, while the words themselves stretched to an ever-receding horizon. Time ceased to have meaning, and the world around her had removed to an infinite distance.

After an unknown interval she became aware that she had reached the name of Oliver Pym's immediate predecessor. Almost wholly inhibited by fear she yet contrived to write

1647 *December* 12 *Master Antoni Kingswelle*

and as she finished doing so she sensed the sudden stooping over her, heard the quick breathing almost in her ears, and saw the hands. They were white hands, unsoiled by manual labour, yet the fingers were blunt and thick and the nails coarse. On the thumbs were little tufts of black hairs: the hands of a man of working stock yet sedentary life. All this she saw and knew in that infinitesimal space of time before she felt them seize her wrists and drag her back into a black roaring abyss of vertigo which screamed past her ears as she fell.

Her own hands were hurting her. Looking down at them, Stephanie saw that she was gripping the edge of the table with painful intensity. She released her hold, and sat for some time looking at the red marks on her palms. Slowly, the warmth of the summer day and the fragrance of the honeysuckle outside the window drew her back into the world of familiar objects. She found herself staring at the sheet of vellum, and experienced surprised relief that it was undamaged, and that her lettering showed no sign of having been done under stress. Still she sat on, slowly testing her senses. Her mind began to function again normally, to attempt to analyse and assess her recent experience, and finally to consider her next move.

I've got to get to the bottom of it, she thought. If whatever is behind it all is really a person—Oliver Pym, in fact—one might be able to help. The Church would call him a damned soul, I expect. I don't believe in that sort of hell, only in the

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sort that people make for themselves and can get out of if they can only want to enough. Anyway, I know now that he can't harm me, even if it shakes one up a bit.

Presently she went over to the house and dialled the Rectory telephone number.

"Yes, of course you can have a look at the parish registers," came John Carruthers' voice in answer to her question. "Pick up the key of the safe on your way over. I'll leave it on the hall table in case I'm out. How are my predecessors going?"

"Fine. I'm nearly halfway through."

Literally true, anyway, she thought, replacing the receiver. Of course, in most ghost stories a priest is called in to do a spot of exorcism, but not in this one, I think. It could hardly be clearer that Oliver Pym doesn't want to be numbered with his fellow incumbents. Anyway, I just couldn't risk letting dear old J.C. in for a show like this morning's.

After lunch Stephanie followed up her intention of looking for information about Oliver Pym in the parish registers. The task was far from easy. The book had suffered from damp, the ink had faded, and the complicated script of the late seventeenth century with its many contractions and elaborate capitals added to the difficulties. Not for the first time Stephanie wondered why the earlier incumbents of English parishes so often chose to cram the maximum possible number of entries on to a page, regardless of legibility. At last she discovered that the burial of *Ol'r Pym*, *Preest* had taken place on 10th December 1662. Squeezed in between this entry and that of the interment of *John, infant sonne of Jn and Mrgt Forde* on 31st December, was an entry in a different hand. Stephanie once again used the magnifying-glass, and found that although some words had faded beyond recall she could make out the gist of it. . . . *ye nekke broke . . . falle fr . . . Acte of God . . . r's queste:*

So that was it.

Oliver Pym had died from a fall, into the plunging terror of which she had in some way been drawn this morning. She sat considering the rest of the entry. "Acte of God." Accidental death it would be today. ". . . r's queste" must be crowner's or coroner's inquest. Presumably there had been talk, and a charitable hand had put the verdict on record. That, in fact, Oliver Pym had committed suicide she had no doubt. Was it because he knew himself to lie unlawfully in consecrated ground that his unquiet spirit struggled to blot out his name from the roll of the parish's Rectors? Deep in thought, she replaced the register in the safe, and going out of the church almost collided with John Carruthers in the porch.

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"Find all you wanted, my dear?" he asked.

"Yes, indeed. I've put the registers back, and here's the key."

"Excellent. Now you needn't go over to the Rectory. I've just come along to get ready for tomorrow. St. Bartholomew, you know, and an Early Celebration."

"It's dreadful, of course, but my mental reaction to the date is the massacre, not the saint."

"That's true of a good many people, I think. With me, Black Bartholomew is a very close second. It's the tercentenary this year, you know."

Stephanie had the sensation of seeing a still far-off gleam of light at the end of a very long tunnel. The Rector was speaking again.

"About two thousand incumbents resigned their livings rather than use the 1662 Prayer Book. Devon had the largest number of resignations of any county. The suffering involved doesn't bear thinking on. And I feel sure that the mental and spiritual distress of some who subscribed against their inmost consciences must have been infinitely worse."

"How absolutely right you are!" She was out of the tunnel now, in broad daylight at last. There was a note in her voice that made John Carruthers give her a quick glance.

"You're looking a bit done up, Stephanie. Don't overdo things. There's no hurry in the world for the list of Rectors."

She longed to be alone and to think over the enlightenment so unexpectedly gained, and as soon as she could, disengaged herself and walked slowly home. Back once more in the garden-room, a vast compassion possessed her. Oliver Pym had wanted the living of Combehead St. Andrew so much that Sunday after Sunday he had conducted worship in forms detestable to his convictions, and by implication subscribed to doctrines which he rejected from the depths of his being. Until the exhausting inner conflict and the mounting sense of guilt made the terrors of a future hell worth risking to obtain release from the present torment. And now, three hundred years later, the frenzied longing to blot out the betrayal of self and of office, was still strong enough to communicate itself, and even to manipulate material things . . .

If he can make contact with my mind, thought Stephanie, then surely I can make contact with him. But is there really enough common ground for argument between a 1662 mind and a 1962 mind? Basic assumptions on so many things, especially religion, are so different. But surely it's as true now as it was then, that you can't get rid of a sense of guilt by pretending that you never took the false step.

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That a further struggle of some kind lay ahead she did not doubt, but the knowledge that she now possessed seemed to have brought some measure of rationality to the situation in which she found herself, and to her surprise she enjoyed the sherry party to which she went with her parents that evening. It was mainly a local affair, in the course of which she found herself talking university shop with James Wroxall, a contemporary at Cambridge. A sudden thought came to her.

"I suppose your people have lived in these parts for ages?" she asked. "I came across some seventeenth century Wroxalls in the parish register today."

"Same family," he said, "but the estate went to a different branch about 1850."

"I'm re-doing the list of Combehead Rectors that hangs in our church, and noticed that the last one was done by M.W. One of your forebears, I expect?"

"Must have been old Marcus, my great-uncle." Colonel Wroxall had joined them. "I remember him very well. Died about 1910, I think. A dear old boy and a great scholar. He lived in one of the cottages that are now part of your house, Stephanie. He was reputed to have seen a ghost, and this impressed me enormously as a small boy, although I never dared ask him about it. Let me get you another drink."

It was reassuring to have M.W.'s bona fides established, and to feel that one had, in a sense, a companion in the uncharted waters. Untroubled by forebodings or dreams, Stephanie slept well. She woke to a clear certainty that she must force the issue in the church itself, based on a conviction that it had been the scene of Oliver Pym's final decision to take his life. The morning passed peacefully in finishing the list, apart from the 1662 entry. As she surveyed her work with a critical eye the empty space seemed to stand out disproportionately, and challenge her.

"Take me on at tennis this afternoon, Steph?" asked Henry at lunch.

"All right. But I just want to finish this job for J.C. and take it down to the church. I shan't be long," she was surprised to hear herself adding.

Half an hour later she cleared the small table inside the south door of parish magazines and the visitors' book, fetched a chair from the vestry, and sat down. Slowly she removed the sheet of vellum from its folder. The church was very silent. A swallow which had flown in through the open door was fluttering against the west window, and there was a faint drone of bees. Stephanie suddenly felt selfconscious. With an effort she clasped her hands together and looked towards the chancel.

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" Oliver Pym—" her voice seemed to echo and re-echo through the nave—" your name must go in. Your time here is a historical fact. It's no good your trying to frighten me into—into—falsifying a record."

There was no immediate answer, but as she began to write she heard the dry, hopeless sobbing from somewhere near the pulpit. She did not look up, but this time it was not fear that restrained her but pity and delicacy. As she finished there was a sudden despairing cry, a rush of footsteps, a glimpse of a figure in black in the chancel, and the sound of the priest's door, now always locked, being violently opened and slammed again. He had gone, and the space in which she had just written his name stared out at her, as empty as before.

Almost without knowing that she had moved, Stephanie found herself at the chancel steps.

" Oliver," she cried urgently, " come back! I can help you. You can escape from all this if only you'll face the truth and admit that you should never have accepted the living of Combehead St. Andrew, knowing that Black Bartholomew was only just ahead. Oliver! Come back now! This may be your last chance of peace."

From outside the church, still some distance away, came the unmistakable sound of a heavy masculine step on the path. For a moment the prospect of some further manifestation seemed more than she could face. Then she steadied herself and walked down the aisle.

The steps drew nearer. Finally, bringing with him an overwhelming sense of anti-climax, a young man in shorts and open-necked shirt stood in the south doorway. He lowered a rucksack on to the mat and stepped inside the church.

" Nice afternoon," he said. " You've got some good things here, haven't you? I collect country churches."

Pulling herself together with an effort, Stephanie began to indicate the church's architectural merits.

" Oh, jolly good," he said. " You're an informed parishioner. I meant to contact the Rector, but I've just seen him haring over to the Rectory at the double. He's probably in Exeter by now! "

Coming over to her he caught sight of the list in her hand. " By jove, that's pleasant. Did you do it? "

" Well yes, I did, as a matter of fact."

Taking it from her he studied it with interest. " Funnily enough I came across an odd little story about a seventeenth-century incumbent of yours the other day. Yes, this was the chap: Oliver Pym."

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THE RIVALS

BY CYRIL HARE

THE detective-sergeant's report was as follows:

To the Chief Constable.

Sir—On the night of the 10th inst. at 7.31 p.m. a telephone message was received at this station to the effect that a girl had been stabbed in Vicarage Lane, Didford Parva. The caller gave his name as John Dennison, already known to me as a youth living in Council Cottages, Yewbury, and the subject of proceedings in the Juvenile Court at Markhampton for assault and larceny (File 892 refers).

I proceeded to the scene, arriving at 8.37 p.m., where I found the body of Christine Barking, aged 18, of Jubilee Terrace, Didford Parva. The Medical Report (herewith) shows that she had been killed by a stab wound between the shoulders, consistent with the use of a long-bladed knife.

I was immediately joined by John Dennison, who approached from the direction of the telephone kiosk, distant approximately 150 yards. He was in a highly emotional state. He informed me that he had met the deceased by appointment that evening with the intention of accompanying her to an old-tyme dance at the Town Hall, Markhampton. They were proceeding to the bus stop at the end of Vicarage Lane with the intention of taking the 7.40 p.m. bus to the city, when a man, whom he could not distinguish in the darkness, sprang out from behind the bushes bordering the lane, struck the deceased from behind and immediately ran away.

Questioned further, Dennison volunteered the information that he believed the assailant to be Charles Packer, already known to me as a youth living at Riverside Lane, Didford Magna, and the subject of proceedings at the last Assizes for malicious wounding (File 493 refers). Dennison stated that Packer had twice threatened him with bodily violence on account of his association with the deceased who, I have reason to think, was a girl of bad character and flighty disposition.

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The crime story differs from its more lawful kin in that it is often presented as a conjuring trick. The narrative is but a piece of entertaining patter, designed to fix your attention upon the conjurer's right hand, whilst his left hand is palming the black-jack with which he plans to hit you in the final line.

To my mind Cyril Hare had very few equals at this. Take the simple little story The Rivals. Refrain from cheating. Cover up the final paragraph. Now try to make up your mind which of the two young men in question was telling the truth and which was lying. And, when you have read the final paragraph, look back and observe how the clue was planted; how, since it was something which could not be glossed over, it was, in fact stressed, but stressed in so different a context that it did not appear to have any connection with the puzzle. M.G.

After making the necessary arrangements for the removal of the body, I invited Dennison to accompany me to the police station. Here I found Charles Packer, who was just completing a statement taken down by Detective-Constable Kimber.

On seeing one another, the two men assumed a fighting attitude, and it became necessary for their own protection to lock them in separate cells.

From D.-C. Kimber's report (herewith) it will be seen that Packer arrived at the police station at 7.40 p.m. (From experiment, I have established that it is just possible to run from the scene of the crime to the station in 10 minutes 12 seconds.) Packer's statement is to the following effect: He had met the deceased by appointment that evening with the intention of accompanying her to the Cairo Cinema, Markhampton. They were proceeding to the bus stop at the end of Vicarage Lane . . . but I need not continue, sir. As will be seen from a comparison of the two statements, they are to all intents identical.

Packer expressed to D.-C. Kimber his firm belief that Dennison who, he stated, had actually assaulted him on three occasions, was responsible for the murder.

In these circumstances, I had both men carefully searched.

On Dennison I found a handkerchief (soiled), a copy of the Markhampton *Evening Record*, a packet of cigarettes, a box of matches, a wallet containing four pound notes, 3s. 6½d. in cash, a pocket comb, and a sheath-knife. He informed me that he carried the knife for protection, with particular reference to Packer. It bore the appearance of having been recently cleaned.

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His suit was of the " Teddy boy " variety, and on the cuff of the right sleeve I discovered a smear of blood. He readily admitted that this in all probability came from the deceased whom, he said, he had supported as she fell after the assault.

On Packer I found a handkerchief (soiled), a lighter, three indecent photographs (herewith), a wallet containing £2 10s., sixpence-halfpenny in cash, a pocket comb, and a belt with an empty sheath. Examination of his cell revealed a knife, similar to that found on Dennison, hidden in a ventilator. After some difficulty, I induced him to agree that it was his property. He stated that he carried it for protection, with particular reference to Dennison.

It also showed signs of having been cleaned, but further inspection revealed traces of blood. Bloodstains were also discovered on his handkerchief. Packer explained these by saying that he was subject to nose bleeding. So far as the blood on the knife was concerned, he said that he had cut his hand while cleaning it. There was in fact a recently healed cut on his right thumb. No blood was found on his clothing, which was of similar type to Dennison's.

Analysis in the police laboratory (report herewith) established that all the blood found was of Group O, which is the blood group to which the deceased belonged. It is also, unfortunately, the fact that Packer's blood is of the same group. Dennison, on examination, proved to be Group AB.

On the morning of the 11th inst. I returned to Vicarage Lane and examined the ground. The lane being muddy, it was possible to distinguish the footprints of a man and a woman leading towards the scene of the crime. I also found the footprints of a man leading from the opposite end of the lane to a group of bushes at the same point (photos herewith). Here they became confused with those of the first pair and with those of myself and other police officers.

I secured the shoes worn by the deceased and was satisfied that these fitted the female footprints referred to. I then obtained the shoes worn by each of the two men, and was immediately struck by the fact that they were in every respect similar, being new, yellow-brown leather brogues with crêpe rubber soles, size 10. Inquiries revealed that they had been bought within a few days of each other at the same firm of outfitters in High Street, Markhampton. Both pairs were somewhat muddy and, needless to say, each fitted perfectly both sets of footprints.

Pursuing my investigations, I interviewed the mother and sister of the deceased. The former was unable to throw any light on her daughter's movements, but the latter told me that

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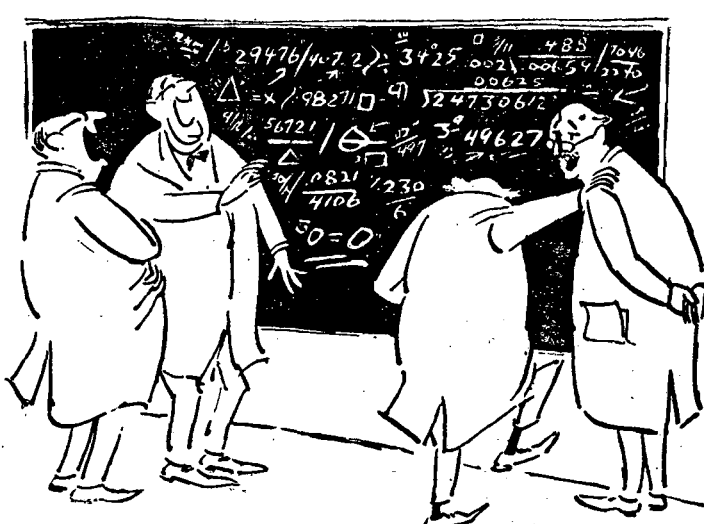
the deceased had been in the habit of going out with both young men indiscriminately, and that she had been threatened by each of them on account of her partiality for the other. She was unable to say with which of them her sister intended to pass the evening in question, but she stated that she was deeply addicted to dancing, and regularly attended dances at the Town Hall. She added that she was a fan of Dwight Bibble, whose new film, *Passion in Paris*, opened at the Cairo Cinema on that day (advert. from the *Evening Record*, herewith, refers).

The inquiry now appears to be at a standstill. Both young men continue to assert the truth of their respective stories, and I am totally unable to determine which of them is lying. The possibility of further evidence coming to light seems to be remote and, while it is quite certain that one of the two is guilty of wilful murder, I must regretfully conclude that there is no prospect of making an arrest in this case.

(J. B. PORTEOUS, Detective-Sergt.)

The Chief Constable read the report through twice. Then he wrote in the margin: *Arrest Dennison immediately. He is a bold liar, but he made one mistake. If he was taking Christine to an old-tyme dance*, what was he doing in brogues with crêpe rubber soles?



"I THOUGHT you fellows would get a kick out of it!"

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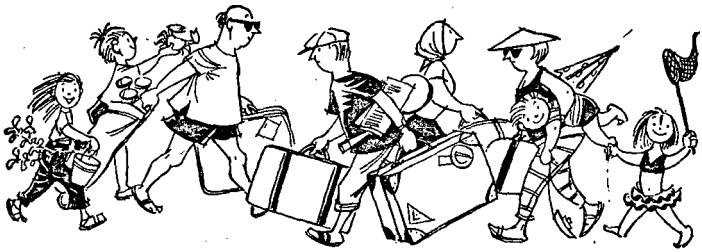

home and away

Always somebody goin' away,
Somebody gettin' home.

Solihull, Headingley and Golders Green,
Preston and Swindon, Manchester and Leeds,
Braintree and Bocking, hear the sea! the sea!
The smack of breakers upon the windy rocks,
Spray blowing backwards from their curling walls
Of green translucent water. England leaves
Her centre for her tide-line. Father's toes,
Though now encased in coloured socks and shoes
And pressing the accelerator hard,
Ache for the feel of sand and little shrimps
To tickle in between them. Mother vows
To be more patient with the family;
Just for its sake she will be young again.
And, at that moment, Jennifer is sick . . .
And Michael's rather pale, and as for Anne . . .
"Please stop a moment, Hubert, anywhere."

JOHN BETJEMAN, *Beside the Seaside*

Larkin About Abroad

Pop was wearing thin blue linen trousers, a yellow sleeveless shirt, yellow canvas shoes and his yachting cap in anticipation of a long spell of French hot weather. In the short passage from the car to the hotel he half-rowed, half-paddled through rising lakes of Atlantic rain and spray. Several times he was convinced he was going under. Once he slipped down and one of the suitcases was blown out of his hands and began to wash away along the quayside. He grabbed it, battled on and found himself shipwrecked inside the vestibule of the hotel . . . assailed by a powerful smell of French cigarettes and leaking gas.

H. E. BATES, *A Breath of French Air*

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Showing a Bold Front

At holiday times there are clots galore on the roads as well as the cream,
Down to Lana's End and back they go in a follow-my-leader dream,
But peace still sleeps along Frenchman's Creek, in St. Tudy, Porthloe and Paul;
When I hit that Bump outside St. Blazey
I.F.S. would have gone plumb crazy,
But the old cart spring said, "Oopsidaisy"
And shed a few leaves, that's all . . .

W. H. CHARNOCK, *Cornish Song*

Cabbing the Bags

Harris and I, having finished up the few things left on the table, carted out our luggage on to the doorstep, and waited for a cab.

There seemed to be a good deal of luggage, when we put it all together. There was the Gladstone and the small hand-bag, and the two hampers, and a large roll of rugs, and some four or five overcoats and mackintoshes, and a few umbrellas, and then there was a melon by itself in a bag, because it was too bulky to go in anywhere, and a couple of pounds of grapes in another bag, and a Japanese paper umbrella, and a frying pan, which, being too long to pack, we had wrapped round with brown paper.

It did look a lot, and Harris and I began to feel rather ashamed of it, though why we should be, I can't see . . . At last, an empty cab turned up (it is a street which, as a rule, and when they are not wanted, empty cabs pass at the rate of three a minute, and hang about, and get in your way), and packing ourselves and our belongings into it, and shooting out a couple of Montmorency's friends, who had evidently sworn never to forsake him, we drove away amidst the cheers of the crowd, Biggs's boy shying a carrot after us for luck.

JEROME K. JEROME, *Three Men in a Boat*

Not Mushroom . . .

We left for Nairobi in the mule-buggy, with the crate of Speckled Sussex pullets, a basketful of vegetables for the hospital, and many other miscellaneous things. In theory, Tilly travelled light, but in practice the imminence of her departure acted like a summer thunder-storm on a mushroom field, and parcels, baskets, and mysterious objects in odd-shaped packages sprung up on all sides.

ELSPETH HUXLEY, *The Flame Trees of Thika*

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Peke a Peck of Pullet

With four reserved seats in a first-class carriage we felt all the pleasures of privacy, and decided to move our hen to the greater comfort of an emptied lunch-basket. But a strong-minded Pembrokeshire pullet is not so easily shifted: at the very moment in which she escaped from our hands and flapped across the seat our train ran into the junction, the door was flung open and the guard ceremoniously ushered in an elegant lady holding a Pekinese dog under her arm.

Two of the party having grabbed the bird and retreated into the corridor, the remaining two plied the lady with sprightly conversation and learnt, beside much else, that her dog had but one fault, he adored chasing hens! Throughout the rest of that long journey whenever the pullet, gone to purdah in the basket under a red silk pocket handkerchief, set up an indignant cackle, the Peke fixed her with a bleary and longing eye.

We thought she laid an egg somewhere in the Severn Tunnel, and just after Swindon she pecked a hole through the handkerchief and reared a furious comb. But string and basket held, (and late that same evening she was in her new home.)

EILUNED LEWIS, *In Country Places*

Oh, what in the world could be more fun
Than to have your holiday over and done;
Than to stand in a rural railway station
With fifty weeks till your next vacation!
Ah me, what jovial words are spoken
When you find the suitcase handle is broken.
You juggle golf bags and tennis rackets,
And ludicrous bulging paper packets,
You count your paraphernalia twice
From the children themselves to their milk and ice.
A whistle announces the train is coming;
You drop the children's portable plumbing;
The train draws up with a jerk and a wiggle
And the only car with an open door
Is a hundred yards behind or before.
Heave up the bags, the ice, the milk,
Heave up your struggling youthful ilk!
Heave up, heave up, and keep on heaving;
This good old train will soon be leaving.

OGDEN NASH, *September Morn*

Let us make an honourable retreat . . . with bag and baggage.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

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MR. JUSTICE DUNCANNON OF TV FAME
APPEARS IN ARGOSY

WIFE IN COURT

BY HENRY CECIL

THE young woman came into Court 1 at the Old Bailey as unobtrusively as was possible for anyone as attractive as she was. The man in the dock turned his head and saw her. After a pause he gave a slight smile which she returned almost shyly. Then they both devoted their full attention to the proceedings.

The foreman was about to give the jury's verdict. Even in a non-capital case it is a tense moment. So much depends on the foreman's words. At the most the total will be six words, at the least three. But the difference to the person in the dock cannot be measured. He and his friends and relatives find the suspense greatest while the jury is filing back into its place. Counsel for the Prosecution usually has no burning desire to secure a conviction, but he will in most cases be more satisfied if there is one. Usually the suspense in his case is more because of the human drama which is being played in front of him than because of the effect on his own career. Counsel for the Defence, on the other hand, has a much greater interest in the matter; old or young, experienced or otherwise, believing in his client's guilt or suspecting that he might actually be innocent, he wants to hear "Not guilty." No doubt at all about that. They will be sweet words for him. Not, of course, as sweet as for the prisoner, but very sweet indeed. And, if he is young and ambitious and perhaps just starting to make his way up the shaky ladder of the law, it will seem terribly important.

The Judge, Mr. Justice Duncannon, on the other hand, did not mind in the least what the verdict was. He was perfectly satisfied of the accused's guilt but he had summed up fairly and he would

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not mind if the jury chose to acquit. That was their province. He was not a Judge who summed up one way or the other. He felt impartial and did his best to appear so. He was a man of sixty and had been a Judge now for ten years. He was the right type for a Judge, a man of decision, ability, and integrity. He had, of course, his faults. For example, he had a tendency to impatience with lawyers slower witted than himself. This particularly showed itself in his treatment of younger members of the Bar.

As he was usually right and young men usually wrong, it was not often that they had the opportunity of having to correct him with justification. When they themselves were mistaken and had not been diplomatic in their method of trying to show that it was the Judge who was mistaken, he made them feel very small indeed. He used few words, but they were very biting and no one ever forgot them. In the odd case when he was himself wrong and the young barrister pointed out the error tactlessly, he would of course be forced to admit the mistake, but he usually did so in a way calculated to give the young man at least some discomfort and sometimes a good deal of it. It was odd that an otherwise fair-minded man should suffer from this defect . . .

"Members of the jury, are you agreed upon your verdict?"

"We are."

"Do you find the accused, Daniel Moore, guilty or not guilty?"

"Guilty."

"Guilty, and that is the verdict of you all?"

"It is."

The man in the dock turned his head and gave a rueful smile to the young woman, but she was not looking in his direction.

Roger Newbury, Counsel for the Prosecution, then called the police officer in charge of the case, who stated that the accused was aged thirty and had never been in trouble before. He had had a good education and had been working in the City at the time of the offence, one of obtaining money by false pretences. It was then stated that the accused admitted three other offences similar in nature to the one of which he had been convicted and wished them to be taken into consideration. The officer added that the accused was a married man with no children.

"Mr. Blaize," said the Judge eventually, "do you wish to say anything in mitigation?"

Arnold Blaize got up. "If your Lordship pleases," he said.

He was an able young man and, apart from one unfortunate episode, had managed to get on pretty well with the Judge, before whom it was his first appearance. He had, however, been rapped over the knuckles pretty smartly once for suggesting that

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the Judge had made a mistake in his understanding of the answer of a witness, when in fact he had not done so. As Blaize had done this in the middle of the summing up, when no Judge welcomes an interruption, the reproof which the young man received was delivered in carefully chosen words which would have made some young barristers wish to retire from the Bar forthwith. However, Arnold Blaize was not so easily dismayed and he was determined to say all that could be said for his client. The young woman and the prisoner looked anxiously at him as he began his address.

"My Lord," he said, "my client wishes to express to your Lordship his deep regret for these offences."

"He's sorry, is he?" said the Judge.

"Very, my Lord."

"I should have been more ready to take notice of that," said the Judge, "if he had *pleaded* guilty. He pleaded not guilty, he said he was not guilty, and now he has been found guilty he says he's sorry. I'm sure he is sorry—that he's been found out."

"My Lord," persisted Blaize, "my client says that, if your Lordship will take a lenient view, he will never trouble your Lordship again."

"He hasn't troubled *me*. It's the public he's troubled. I can't possibly overlook this."

"Oh, my Lord," said Blaize, "I wasn't suggesting your Lordship should overlook it. But my client is a young married man with an excellent character hitherto, and I would respectfully suggest that a fine might meet the case."

"Because your client has means," said the Judge, "he needn't think he can buy himself out of this. A poor man couldn't pay a fine."

"But with respect, my Lord, you shouldn't send my client to prison because he has means."

"I shall send him to prison because of his crimes, not because of his means."

"But your Lordship implied that, because a poor man would have to go to prison in default of payment of a fine, your Lordship was going to send my client to prison."

"I implied nothing of the kind," said the Judge.

"Then with respect, my Lord, I don't follow your Lordship's reference to a poor man. A poor man has nothing to do with it if, poor or rich, he should be sent to prison."

This was a good point and the Judge knew it. He found silence the easiest answer to it. Silence is one of the strongest judicial weapons. Blaize waited for him to say something, but he remained silent.

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" Go on, please, Mr. Blaize," he said eventually.

" Would your Lordship be good enough to tell me what your Lordship's reference to a poor man meant? Then perhaps I can deal with the point which was in your Lordship's mind."

" I am not here to answer your questions, Mr. Blaize," said the Judge.

" Of course not," said Blaize, " and I'm sure your Lordship wants to do justice and, if a prisoner's Counsel can't understand an observation of the Judge, I am sure you would wish to make it plain to him."

Again he waited for a word from the Bench, but there was none.

" No doubt it's entirely my fault," Blaize went on, " but it is my client who will suffer."

" He should have thought of that before he started on this criminal enterprise."

At this stage the young woman and the prisoner, who had been looking intently at Blaize, looked for a moment at each other. " It's hopeless," their eyes said.

" My Lord," Blaize went on, " I was submitting to your Lordship that this offence could be met with a fine and your Lordship said that a poor man couldn't pay a fine."

" You said that before," said the Judge.

" I respectfully submit that your Lordship should not send my client to prison because he *could* pay a fine."

" It is not in my opinion a case for a fine," said the Judge.

" Then, my Lord," said Blaize, " with the greatest possible respect, I do not follow your Lordship's reference to a poor man being unable to pay a fine."

" That's the third time you've said that," said the Judge.

" And with respect," said Blaize boldly, " it's the third time your Lordship has failed to deal with the point."

" Behave yourself, Mr. Blaize," said the Judge, using the word most calculated to make a witness or an advocate feel that he is back at school.

" I intend no discourtesy to your Lordship," said Blaize.

" Well, you show it," said the Judge.

" I'm sorry, my Lord."

" So is your client," said the Judge, " and for much the same reason."

" My Lord," said Blaize, " it's my duty to say all that can be said on behalf of my client."

" It is also your duty to behave yourself, and mine to see that you do."

" It is also my duty to see that I understand your Lordship's

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observations, and your Lordship was comparing my client with a poor man and saying—"

"Leave the poor man out of it, Mr. Blaize," said the Judge. "I'm dealing with your client, who is not a poor man. I simply said that because a man has money, that doesn't mean he can avoid punishment for his crimes."

"But, my Lord," said Blaize, "if the crime deserves imprisonment a poor man would have to go to prison just as much as a rich man. Your Lordship said a poor man couldn't pay a fine. And, unless that meant that my client had to go to prison because he *could* pay a fine, I don't know what it meant and I respectfully ask your Lordship for guidance on the matter."

"I have already asked you to leave the poor man out of it. Is there anything else you wish to say?"

Another hopeless look passed between the prisoner and the young woman.

"Your Lordship must have considered the possibility of a fine in this case," Blaize went on.

"I've done nothing of the kind," said the Judge. "I tell you it's not a case for a fine."

"Then, my Lord," said Blaize, "I still don't see where the poor man comes in."

"Sit down, please, Mr. Blaize," said the Judge.

"But, my Lord . . ."

"Sit down, please. When you repeat yourself a fourth time, I'm entitled to assume that you have nothing further to say. Sit down. Thank you."

Blaize sat down. The prisoner looked resigned. A look of wild fury was on the young woman.

"Daniel Moore," said the Judge, addressing the prisoner, "you have been convicted of or admitted a number of frauds and, although you have hitherto borne a good character, I cannot possibly give effect to your learned Counsel's submission. You will go to prison for twelve months."

"You beast," hissed the young woman, but not loud enough to be heard by any official.

Six weeks later Mr. Justice Duncannon got into the carriage of a non-corridor train at a London terminus. The carriage was empty and he lit a cigarette and then started to read the paper. Just before the train left, the young woman who had been at the trial at the Old Bailey got in and sat down. She sat on the opposite side of the carriage to the Judge in the farther corner. After the train had been going a minute or two she suddenly spoke rather falteringly. "My Lord," she began.

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The Judge looked at her. He saw a very attractive young woman whom he could not possibly have forgotten having met before. But she looked respectable.

"Yes, madam?" he said. "I don't think I've had the pleasure . . ."

"No, my Lord." There was silence for a few seconds, and then she began again.

"My Lord . . ."

The use of the expression "My Lord" rather irritated the Judge. He was not going to get involved in conversation, but at least he could put that right.

"Forgive me, madam," he said, "but you don't call Judges 'my Lord' out of Court."

"What should I call you then? 'Sir' doesn't sound right."

"Well, madam, quite frankly, as we don't know one another, there appears to be no need to call me anything."

The Judge retired into his paper. But he didn't read it. He was a little unhappy about his curtness. After all, she hadn't been impertinent or offensive in any way. He oughtn't to have treated her like that.

"Please don't think I wish to be offensive, madam," he said, "but I like to read when travelling."

"I might have been a friend of a relative of yours," said the girl.

"Then you wouldn't have called me 'my Lord.'"

"I might have been an uneducated friend of a relative."

"Are you, madam? A friend of a relative, I mean."

"No. But I still don't know what to call you."

"There's no need to call me anything, madam. If you would like the window open or shut or you want a match, please ask."

"It's a non-smoker, as a matter of fact."

"Oh," said the Judge. "Oh—I'm sorry. I apologise, madam. I'll put it out."

"It wasn't that. I'd love a cigarette myself."

The Judge offered her one of his but she refused, saying that she only smoked her own.

The Judge went back to his paper. Occasionally he glanced up at her but immediately went back to the paper when he caught her eye. He was a little intrigued to know why she had started the conversation. What had she wanted?

"How should I attract your attention," she said eventually, "without calling you something?"

"Well you have, madam. Did you want to ask me something?"

"Not ask really. Tell."

The Judge was not quite sure now what to do. He was slightly

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intrigued but he certainly had no intention of picking up a strange young woman, however attractive, in a railway carriage. However, she was well spoken and he supposed it couldn't do any harm just to be polite.

"You want to tell me something?" he asked.

"Yes. May I?"

This was an awkward question. To say no is rude, to say yes is to encourage conversation. For the moment he tried silence.

"May I?" she repeated.

There was nothing else for it.

"Certainly, madam."

"Oh, thank you. I didn't expect it to be so easy. That's my second piece of luck. The guard forgot to lock you in."

"How do you know that?"

"I've followed you here for the last six weeks."

That made things quite certain.

"I'm afraid I don't wish to continue this conversation, madam," he said. He retired very deliberately into the paper.

"But you said I could tell you something," said the girl. "And I'm going to. You can pretend not to listen if you like, but you can't help hearing. I said I'd been following you here for the last six weeks; don't you want to know why? Don't you?"

"No, madam," said the Judge.

"Then I'll tell you. I've been following you here ever since you gave Daniel Moore twelve months at the Old Bailey six weeks ago. It was a disgraceful exhibition. You wouldn't even listen to his Counsel."

The Judge thought for a moment or two. Then, "You're the wife, I suppose?" he asked.

"Yes, but how did you know?"

"From your obvious indignation at my sending your husband to prison. But I'm afraid I can't discuss the matter."

"I didn't come here to discuss it," said the girl. "I came here to tell you about it. That's quite a different thing. Now listen."

The Judge very deliberately looked at his paper.

"That's very childish. You're imprisoned with me here for the next half-hour. You might as well make the best of it. Or at least be grown up. You're behaving like I used to when I was twelve."

After about half a minute the girl got up and came and sat next to the Judge. He disregarded her. She edged closer. Now he had to do something about it.

"Kindly go back to your seat, madam."

"That's better. You said something."

"Kindly go back to your seat."

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"That's twice. Go on. Put me back. I shan't struggle—much. Why shouldn't I sit next to you?"

The Judge got up and walked across to the corner seat in the farther part of the carriage and sat down. The girl waited a moment or two and then went over to him.

"Madam," said the Judge, "if you don't stop annoying me I shall pull the communication cord."

"I shouldn't," said the girl.

She looked at her knee which was showing slightly below her skirt.

"They mightn't believe me, but it would be in all the papers. Wouldn't look so good. I shouldn't allege anything very terrible—just the sort of thing old gentlemen do—your hand on my knee or something. But it would be an assault all the same. JUDGE CLEARED OF ASSAULT CHARGE. Wouldn't look well, would it?"

The Judge now had to do some extremely quick thinking. He was a highly intelligent man with a vivid imagination. If he pulled the communication cord and the guard arrived and she said that she had pulled it and made an allegation of a slight assault against him, it would be a very serious matter for him. No court, of course, could convict him upon that evidence but a good many people might think that it was true. It would have been much better for him if the allegation had been a wilder one. But people would ask themselves why she should make this very mild allegation that he simply put his hand upon her knee. And she was quite right in saying that old gentlemen did that sort of thing. He was still considering the matter when she spoke again.

"Look," she said. "I'll make a bargain with you. If you'll talk, I'll go and sit over the other side. How's that? Like this."

She got up and went into the corner farther away from the Judge, crossed her legs, and twiddled her thumbs.

"Well, is it a bargain?"

The Judge felt that he must not give in too far. That was the danger with blackmailers. What next might she ask?

"I warn you, madam, that if you interfere with my comfort again I'll pull the cord."

"I only want to talk," she said. "But I shouldn't pull the cord. I don't want my name in the papers any more than you do. But, if it's got to be in, I'll have my money's worth. And you couldn't get me convicted of perjury either. You need two witnesses for that."

She laughed. "Fancy me telling a Judge that."

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" You could be fined for interfering with my comfort," said the Judge. " That's an offence."

" What's a fine? I couldn't be sent to prison. Of course, a poor woman wouldn't be able to pay the fine. Remember? And I'll tell you another thing. They might believe me, not you. Everyone doesn't like Judges the same as you do. So be sensible and talk. If you don't, *I* might pull it. And, if I just tell my modest little story—nothing flamboyant, no torn dresses—just, ' He leaned forward and put his hand on my stockinged knee.' My stockinged knee," she repeated, and she put her hand on it. " And you won't be able to raise the just-a-friendly-gesture defence because you'll have to say you never did it. So please talk. We haven't so long."

" I will not discuss the case," said the Judge.

" That's better. Well, you can just listen. You behaved disgracefully at that trial. Not before the finding of guilty. I will say you were perfectly fair until then. But when you let out that bit about the poor man, you were caught and you knew it. And you hadn't the courage or grace to admit it. But Counsel had the courage all right and he wouldn't let go. And all you did at the end was to tell him to sit down. It was just abuse of power. Like post office clerks who won't attend to you or box office managers when the play's a success or anyone else who has a bit of power and abuses it. But you're a Judge and you ought to know better."

" Madam," said the Judge after some thought, " your behaviour is intolerable. It probably amounts to contempt of Court and I expect I could have you sent to prison. Have *you* thought of that? "

It was the girl's turn to be shocked. But she was not going to show it more than she could help. " Sent to prison! " she said. " I couldn't be for talking to you here. And anyway I don't care. I've waited six weeks to say it and I will say it. You must be a small-minded man. You have so much power. There's no excuse for abusing it. There's much more excuse for the little people. Like me, I mean, I've just abused my power as a woman."

" We can agree on that," said the Judge.

" But I was provoked. You weren't."

" How were you provoked? " asked the Judge.

" By your behaviour, of course."

" It's you whose behaviour has been disgraceful, not mine, madam," said the Judge.

" I don't mean here," said the girl. " I mean at the trial."

" Wives whose husbands fare badly in a Court of Law often blame the Judge."

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"There was no excuse for shutting up his Counsel."

"There was every reason. He just kept on repeating himself."

"Only because you never dealt with his point about the poor man. Why did you talk about the poor man unless you had a fine in mind? 'You can't buy your way out of this. A poor man couldn't pay a fine.' What did that mean?"

The Judge said nothing.

"Well, what did it mean?" she repeated. "He asked you four times, and I ask you once and you can't answer because you know there isn't an answer. Is there?"

"I don't propose to discuss the matter further with you, madam," said the Judge. "If you choose to pull the communication cord, that is entirely a matter for you."

He went back into his paper but he had no idea what he was supposed to be reading. He was thinking. Shortly before they arrived at the next station the Judge suddenly spoke.

"Madam," he said, "as I said before, your behaviour has been intolerable. And, having had time to think about the matter, I am quite satisfied that you *could* be sent to prison for contempt of Court for talking to me in the way that you have."

"And I've had time to think about it too," said the girl, "and I don't care if you do. It'll only be one abuse of power followed by another."

"Madam," said the Judge rather more gently, "I didn't say that I was going to have you sent to prison. As a matter of fact, your criticism of my behaviour in Court was perfectly justified. And when I next see Counsel for your husband I shall apologise to him.

"And insofar as you are concerned in the matter," went on the Judge, "I apologise to you too. The sentence was fair enough. But I did not treat Counsel fairly. And you are a very courageous young woman to have told me so."

"Good gracious!" said the girl. "I said you were a little man but, my Lord, sir, or whatever I should say, you're a big man. Thank you."

The train drew in at the station, and the Judge said to himself, Well, you're little enough of a man to want to get out at this station as quickly as you possibly can.

It was some time before the Judge had the opportunity of seeing Arnold Blaize and apologising. At first he had intended to send for him at the earliest possible moment, but then he realised that it was already six weeks after the trial and that would look rather odd. There was no reason why he should tell him

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about his extraordinary adventure in the train and, unless he gave some explanation, it would seem funny to wait for six weeks and then take the trouble to send for him to apologise. On the other hand, if he happened to meet him at some gathering, that was quite a different matter and he could take the opportunity of doing what he had firmly intended to do ever since he had left the girl in the railway carriage.

The chance came at a garden party at one of the Inns of Court. He saw Blaize and went over to him. After a few general remarks he came to the point. Then he apologised handsomely and congratulated Blaize on the way he had stood up to him.

"That took a lot of courage," he said.

The young man was embarrassed but he eventually started to say, "Oh, Judge," he began, "it's—it's very good of—"

He broke off as he saw a girl coming towards them.

"Oh, Judge," he went on, "might I introduce my wife?"

The girl in the train came up to them.

"How d'you do, Mrs. Blaize," said the Judge. They shook hands. "Shall I tell him?" he asked.

She begged him not to with her eyes.

"Tell me what, Judge?" asked Blaize.

"But you must know already," said the Judge.

The girl shook her head.

"Know what already?" asked Blaize.

"Well, if you don't, you should," said the Judge. "And I propose to tell you." He looked at the girl. "You deserve it, you know," he said. The girl still pleaded.

There was a pause.

"Blaize," went on the Judge, "I think you should know that you have a very attractive wife. It's time someone told you."

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SOLUTION to ARGOSY CROSSWORD

on page 136

Across. 1, *Goulash.* 4, *Against.* 9, *Flamborough.* 11, *Nell.* 12, *Oaks.* 13, *Peasant.* 15, *Editor.* 16, *Daniel.* 17, *Ply.* 19, *Ogygia.* 20, *Attila.* 22, *Raw.* 25, *Piquet.* 27, *Aright.* 28, *Seasons.* 29, *Grab.* 31, *Tsar.* 32, *Dead freight.* 33, *Margins.* 34, *Steeple.*

Down. 1, *Grandee.* 2, *Lull.* 3, *Summer.* 5, *Ground.* 6, *Iago.* 7, *Thistle.* 8, *Fossil.* 9, *Flying squad.* 10, *Hagiologist.* 13, *Porgies.* 14, *Tartars.* 17, *Par.* 18, *Yaw.* 21, *Epigram.* 23, *Assort.* 24, *Storage.* 26, *Tendon.* 27, *Anoint.* 30, *Berg.* 31, *Thee.*

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BE FAT AND LOVE IT

ANYONE can be fat if he is sensible about it and really wants to eat. It just takes a certain amount of lack of will power and a healthy appetite to turn the corner.

Now, I know you're going to say, "How can I gain weight when my doctor is constantly warning me to slim down and my spouse watches me like a hawk?"

The truth is, you have to be sneaky about it. You can fool anyone if you really try.

When I first started to gain weight, I did it in a haphazard way, eating a little here and a little there; but finally I decided that if I ever wanted to do it correctly, I would have to work on it scientifically.

In the morning, for example, to please my wife I had orange juice, a cup of black coffee, and two slices of dry toast.

Then I took a taxi to a restaurant near my office and had a breakfast of ham and eggs, buttered English muffins, coffee with cream and sugar, and a doughnut.

For lunch, I ate anything I wanted to, provided it was served with potatoes, and I always made sure to have a pie or a good-size custard for dessert.

At three o'clock, I told my secretary I had to have a drink with a beautiful girl; but instead, I went and had a hot-fudge sundae.

In the evening, if I had to dine at home, I had steak and a salad; but after dinner I pretended I had to go out to buy a paper, at which time I had two hamburger sandwiches and a malted milk.

Then, after my wife went to sleep, I sneaked into the kitchen and stole some of the children's cereal and sweet cream.

In no time at all I was gaining weight, and all my friends started talking about me. My cheeks became chubby, my chin nearly doubled, and I was beginning to feel simply wonderful.

I never wavered from my determination to put on extra

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by

ART BUCHWALD

pounds, and today I am living proof that anyone can gain weight if he goes about it scientifically and really tries. The thing you have to remember is to eat all you want, drink all you want, and buy your clothes one size larger than you are.

There are some don'ts involved with any regimen of this kind. Here are a few of them:

DON'T refuse second portions when dining at somebody else's home.

DON'T leave anything on your plate, no matter how full you are.

DON'T exercise or do any sports that might make you burn up energy.

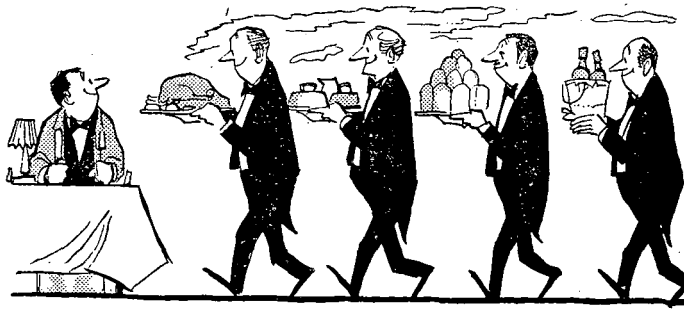
DON'T read any best-sellers about how to lose weight.

DON'T tell your wife what you had for lunch at the restaurant.

The thing to do is let your stomach—and not your head—be your guide. Whatever your stomach desires, give it. After all, we have only one stomach, though many of us have two heads.

That's all there is to gaining weight. Many people think there is a great mystery to it; but the fact is, anyone can gain weight if he thinks big and eats big.

There is no reason today for anyone to be thin when there are so many wonderful ways of getting fat without even trying.



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The Sacred Skull

By PEARL S. BUCK

RASHIL BOSE was crossing the quadrangle when he received the cable announcing his father's death. It was a fine spring morning, the third of May, and this date he was to hold in his memory as the day his father actually died. Until then, at that moment of half past nine in the morning, for him his father was alive. Suddenly the telegraph boy, a gay casual sort of boy, chewing gum and breathing hard from running, handed him the white envelope. He tore it open and read the brief declaration.

" Sign here," the boy said carelessly.

Rashil, in a daze, signed for his father's death. He handed the stubby pencil back to the boy, noticed how dirty the hand was that received it. Then as the boy rode off he sat down on a bench under a tree. He read the cable again. It was sent by his sister.

FATHER DIED THIS MORNING STOP FUNERAL WAITS YOUR ARRIVAL STOP PADMAYA

He folded the slip of paper carefully and put it into his breast-pocket. Without believing his father could be dead, he realised

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that he must see his tutor at once and arrange for his flight home. He lingered nevertheless minute by minute, feeling too weak to move. The world about him was suddenly static, fixed in beauty, the trees green, in full leaf but still fresh with the spring, and the mellow buildings standing in contrasting permanence. A bird was singing in the tree under which he sat and in the sunshine, brilliant yet soft, young men strolled to their lectures. Many of them knew him and called to him.

"Hullo there, Rash!"

He had never told his father that they called him Rash. Rashil was an old family name, dignity implicit, and his father would have stared at him, disapproving.

"You should have stopped them at the first time."

Though he had never heard his father say these words he could almost hear him saying them now, here in the college quadrangle. He waved his hand half-heartedly at the insouciant Englishmen, then unwillingly compelled himself towards his tutor's room. A moment later he was there, but he did not trust himself to speak the evil news. Instead he put the cable on the tutor's desk and sat down. His tutor was a sharp-faced genial man, past sixty, cynical and kind after long experience with Cambridge undergraduates. He read the cable, then folded it and handed it back.

"Ah," he said. "I am extremely sorry. I have never met your father, as you know. I don't think he has ever visited our country, has he? No, I thought not, but his correspondence with me about you—rather voluminous, I must say, though I've never troubled you with it—revealed him as a cultivated and, shall I say, somewhat powerful man. Would you like to have these letters?"

"If you don't mind," Rashil murmured.

"I will have them given to you now," his tutor said. He touched a bell and a greyhaired woman came in.

"Louise;" he said, "please get the letters that Rashil's father has sent me. You will find them in his file."

"Yes, I know, sir," his secretary said somewhat resentfully, as though it were her business and not his where his letters were kept. She left the room and his tutor went on talking.

"You will return to us in the autumn, I hope."

"I also hope," Rashil said.

"It would be a pity not to complete your final year. You have been a credit to your father, Rashil."

"Thank you, sir."

The greyhaired woman entered at this moment, a sizeable packet of letters in her hand. She put them on the desk and went away again. The tutor took them and riffled them.

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" Quite a lot of them, all written on that thin Indian paper—his handwriting beautiful but very small and the lines compressed. I had often to put them aside until evening and a little leisure. Now they are yours—you'll be able to read them on the way home."

He slipped them into a large brown envelope and handed them to Rashil.

" Thank you, sir," Rashil said, receiving them.

The tutor glanced restlessly at the accumulation on his desk. " If I can help you—"

" I just came to say good-bye, sir."

" Good-bye, my boy. I am sorry indeed—but you'll be back, you'll be back."

They shook hands, Rashil's narrow dark hand wincing in the large firm British clasp. Then, the packet of letters under his arm, he left the room and was out in the sunshine again.

He had no idea that his father had so concerned himself in his academic life. The letters he had received from India carried admonitions from both parents, although they were always signed by his father, but he had supposed that this was as far as parental interest went.

Padmaya was fitful in letter writing as she was in everything. Months might pass without a word from her, and suddenly he might receive daily letters for a week or even two. Thus he had been given no warning of his father's illness. Yet yesterday his father had died, and tonight, no later, he must be on his way home.

He must arrange for his ticket through the office of the travel agents where Josie worked, and then get his things together. Josie must be told, of course. It would be difficult. He had let things go a little too far, but he might have gone further had he not known what his father would have said, were he to—

" My son," his father's voice rolled out from his memory. " You are a young man about to go to a distant country, beyond the reach of my voice. But you are never beyond the reach of my heart. Conduct yourself as though I were by your side."

He had not conducted himself always as though his father were by his side, for no one had quite prepared him for Josie. Let him be truthful—he had enjoyed certain moments with her particularly because his father was not at his side. Now that his father was dead, perhaps there would never be such moments again. The dead have a way of being more present than when they are alive.

He walked slowly on his way as he pursued these thoughts and came in a quarter of an hour to the office where Josie was at work. He saw her red head glowing among the grey steel

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filing cabinets. It had been her hair that first attracted him—very astonishing hair. Obviously a girl's hair could now be the colour she wished it to be. He had never had the courage to inquire of Josie whether this was only the colour she had chosen.

She saw him coming and sent him her wide smile. The warmth of it drew him as it always did. Her voice sang at him.

"Rash, what brings you here this time of day? Oughtn't you to be in physics or something?"

He took the cable from his breastpocket and handed it to her in silence.

She read it, her cheerful face, pleasant but not quite pretty, growing grave.

"Rash, it's terrible! You didn't know he was ill or anything did you?"

He shook his head. Tears filled his eyes and hung on his lashes. She saw them and drew him between two tall cabinets and put her arms around him.

"Rashil, darling—"

He leaned his head on her shoulder and sobbed once. Then he straightened himself. "Josie, I have to go home today. How do I get a ticket?"

"It's not easy at the last minute like this, but I'll see what I can do. Your father was pretty important, wasn't he?"

"I suppose—yes, he was—he was the head of his company—a big jute firm—"

"In the government, I mean—"

"Yes, a member of the cabinet—"

"I'll tell them that. It makes a difference. If I'm stuck, can't you get someone to—to—"

"I shouldn't like to—"

"Leave it to me then, darling—oh, how I'm going to miss you—"

She held him tightly, and in his distress he did what he had never yet allowed himself to do—he put his arms about her too, and they clung together for a moment. Then she lifted her head and pursed her lips and they kissed. That, too, he had never done. It was strangely comforting.

"Rash," she said softly. "I wonder if you'll ever know what you've taught me—"

"Taught you, Josie?"

"That a man can be sweet, and courteous—waiting instead of grabbing—"

He looked so puzzled that she stepped back.

"Never mind—I don't know what I'm talking about. I'll get you the tickets, Rash. Don't worry."

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He went away then, trusting her. She was so capable, so sure of what she could do, and he was not in the least surprised when, later in the day while he was packing, she telephoned him.

"Rash, I'll send your tickets across to you."

"Oh, Josie, thank you—"

"Listen, Rash—I don't want to say good-bye. This morning was enough. I hate good-byes. They're so . . . final. Only—are you coming back?"

"I hope so."

"So do I. Until then—God bless you—"

Her voice suddenly choked.

"Josie," he cried. "I must see you before I go. I can fetch my tickets from you, can't I?"

"All right, Rash—I'll keep your tickets." He heard her receiver click into place and then silence . . .

He was in the jet before he had time to think again; after the rush of packing, the few essential delays, he had just made it into the jet. Josie had got him a seat somehow, for the plane was crowded. He took his place, fastened the belt round him, leaned back, and closed his eyes. This morning he had got up as usual, breakfasted, and walked his usual path across the college quadrangle to his physics lecture, and here he was on his way home to India to face what complications he did not know. It was a complicated family, his father the head of it and he his father's only son. After the funeral—

The funeral! They would have it all planned, expecting him—no, demanding, that he fit himself into the ritual and assume the responsibilities. He would not do it—he simply would not do it. The seat-belt was suddenly too tight and he sat up to loosen it. The engines were roaring and the great jet quivered. He closed his eyes again, half afraid, half excited, and then was reassured. It was absurd in this day of jets and rockets that funeral rites, old and obsolete and belonging to an age when science was unknown, should still have to be observed.

"They do not have to be observed," he muttered aloud. But his voice was drowned in the roar of the rising jet . . .

They met him at the airport in Calcutta, his entire family, he saw in the first glance. Only his father was conspicuously absent. That tall gaunt figure in white robes towering over all others! He felt the first pang of realisation. Then he was immersed in his family, their loving hands clutching at him, their cheeks pressed to his, the air quivering with their sobs and cries, all the old overwhelming family love, warm and stifling. Oh, how he missed the waiting figure of his father, standing aside,

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patient until the clamour of women and children and cousins and lesser relatives was satisfied! From them in the past he had always turned gratefully to his father's handclasp, cool and understanding.

"Son—"

He listened involuntarily for the sonorous voice and knew with sudden terror that he would never hear it again. Instead he heard his mother's wailing.

"Rashil—Rashil, my son, my darling—we have all waited for you. You must tell us what to do. You are the head of the family now.

"Rashil, he died so suddenly, without warning—"

She was weeping and talking at the same time, clinging to his arm.

He was soothing her as his father might have done while they climbed into the three waiting motor cars. They were crowded as usual. In the car with him, his mother, and Padmaya, were his eldest cousin, the cousin's wife and their young sons, and his two aunts who were his father's sisters. Their saris fluttered in the hot wind from the open windows and made the very air restless. The relentless heat of the city was enhanced, it always seemed, by the swarming multitudes of people. He had forgotten how many people there were in Bangipur.

In the midst of the unceasing talk of the relatives, Padmaya sat silent. He looked at her, and her eyes met his in understanding. She gave him a slight smile. It was from her that he would get the full story which now poured upon him in fragments.

His father, it appeared, had had a cerebral hæmorrhage. There had been no time for instructions or directions. He had risen from his frugal morning meal and had prepared as usual to go to his offices, the offices of the Development and Investment Company, of which he was founder and president.

"He turned to me," his mother was saying dramatically, the tears streaming down her cheeks. "He turned to me to tell me what I should do during the day until he came home. He opened his mouth to speak, he could not speak. I saw a look of surprise in his eyes—he fell to the floor! He never spoke again, though we lifted him at once. I did not even know what he had meant me to do that day, so I did nothing except sit by his side until—"

"We all sat by his side," his elder aunt put in.

"Except Padmaya," his second aunt added.

"All his relatives," his cousin agreed.

"Except Padmaya," the second aunt said again.

Padmaya said nothing in her own defence. Her immense dark

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eyes did not even fill with tears. She had adored her father passionately, although it had always been obvious that the father's favourite was Rashil.

Before the women had told him everything, they had reached the enormous old house where the family lived. Rashil got out first because they insisted upon it, since he was now the head of the family. Servants swarmed out of the doors, and he paused as they knelt to take the dust from his feet in new reverence for his position now in the family, inclining his head slightly. Then he went to the room which had been especially his father's. Like other Indian houses of wealth, rooms were not designated. One slept where the breeze was most cool. His father, however, had always maintained this room as his own. There was no bed in it, for even his father slept where the air stirred, but here he worked and read and reflected and here were his books, a formidable array in many languages. His father had been a scholar as well as a businessman, an unusual combination. The room might have belonged to an Englishman, for the furniture was western—bookcases, a desk and a chair, and a low couch.

Rashil closed the door and stood looking about him. It was impossible to believe that his father would never enter this room again. He walked across the floor and sat down before the desk. There before him was his own face, a photograph taken a year ago in the college quadrangle at Cambridge. His best friend, Tom Akens, had snapped it and had it enlarged because it was good. "You are a handsome young devil," Tom had said. He had left without seeing Tom or any of his friends. It had seemed unendurable—was it only two days ago?—to face any of them. And he had always kept his Indian life completely separate from his English one. He had not even allowed Josie to go to the station with him.

"I'll be back very soon," he had told her, when she handed him the jet reservation in her office. She had put her arms about his neck and kissed his cheek, a sweet gesture which stirred him, although he did not allow himself to think it serious. English girls kissed too easily. In India it was unthinkable. Even in films it was not acceptable and kisses were cut from foreign films before they were shown, leaving strange gaps which he had not understood until he saw the same pictures in a Cambridge cinema. Indian films substituted a song for a kiss when the tension grew unbearable, but Josie would have thought him mad had he burst into song as they parted. At the thought he forgot himself and smiled.

"What are you smiling about?" Padmaya inquired. She had come in silently upon her sandalled feet.

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" A strange, useless thought," he replied.

He rose from the desk and sat on the edge of the low couch, but she sank gracefully to the floor.

" Padmaya," he said abruptly.

" Yes, Rashil? "

She was quite beautiful now, he noticed with some surprise, in spite of her dark skin. She was not very dark at that, and it might be only that he had grown used to Josie. He went on, " I will not go through with the rites! "

Padmaya waited. He rose and walked about the room, frowning. " Father was modern in his spirit, he would not want me to—to be compelled to—"

" He left no instructions," Padmaya said quietly. " I searched his desk. That is what I was doing while the rest of them were wailing and weeping. I looked through his papers. There was nothing about his funeral."

" Because he did not expect to die."

He went to sit at the desk again, and abruptly he turned his own photographed face down. That young face smiling gaily as though his father were not dead.

" Padmaya," he said, " I will not do it."

" I know how you feel," she said thoughtfully, " but you will have to do it."

" He had the finest brain I have ever known, the most intricate logical original brain—I cannot do it," he said stubbornly.

" I wish I could do it for you," Padmaya said in a low voice. " I knew you would not want to—but no one else would ever be allowed to."

" I never thought of his dying before I saw him again," he muttered. " I thought he had years ahead of him—only fifty-four—was he ill at all? "

" No—not that we knew. I thought he looked tired of late. But he said nothing."

" Padmaya! "

" Yes? "

" Do you think he believed in—an after life? "

She nodded towards the book-lined walls. " Look at those books and tell me! "

He obeyed, walking slowly along the shelves. They revealed a ranging brilliant mind, engaged in metaphysics and physics, immersed in the arts and creation. He had never looked at these books before as a reflection of his father's mind. They had all taken his father for granted. They had taken for granted the lamp burning late into the night, the early rising, the long meditative silences, the careful, detailed answers to their questions,

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too detailed sometimes, for he had not always listened patiently to what his father could tell him. He had simply taken it for granted that his father knew everything; but he could never have known how nearly true this was, had he not gone to Cambridge. Yet his father had never left India.

"I cannot do it," he said again and finally. "I shall simply gather the family together and tell them that he must be buried in the English fashion, in the English cemetery. Father had many English friends in the days before independence."

"He was also a friend of Gandhi," Padmaya reminded him.

"He did not always agree with Gandhi," he reminded her in turn, and sharply. He threw himself on to the low couch and lay back and repeated in a chant, his eyes closed, "I simply cannot do it—I simply will not do it—"

Padmaya rose to her feet as gracefully as a cat. "Very well," she said, "I will call the family together. The funeral cannot be delayed."

They were all waiting for him when, half an hour later, she summoned him. No one had left the house. As Padmaya said, the funeral could not be delayed but he refused to allow himself to think of his father, patient in death, in the chill of the icehouse. It was absurd and undignified.

He strode out of the room and into the big main hall where the family sat, the elders on the cushions on the floor, and the children running about. They were there waiting to be directed by him. Very well, he would direct them.

"My dear ones," he began, using the Hindi to which they were accustomed, although some of the relatives had come from other states and provinces. It was a large family, yet unified in all its ramifications and his father had been the acknowledged head, even in these modern times.

A warm murmur swept over them. He began afresh.

"My dear ones, I am glad to be safely with you again, although the circumstances are heartbreaking. My father—"

Here his voice faltered in spite of his determination, and at this light sign the women began to sob. He put up his hand and steadied his voice.

"We must not indulge ourselves, please! I have to speak in his place, on his behalf. I must explain why I feel compelled to say what I shall say as soon as I have explained."

He looked at them, wondering how to go on. There were his ageing aunts, his father's sisters, their dark faces turned to him as though to the sun, and his mother, the end of her sari drawn across her mouth, and his cousins, male and female, their wives and husbands and children. Beyond these stood the servants,

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all waiting for him to declare his will as head of the family. He went on.

"How shall I explain to you my father? Each of you knew him in your own way. To each of you he gave a particular side of himself. I knew him as a kind but just father. To me he was like the heavens above me, the earth beneath my feet. I never thought of his death. I am not prepared to know that he is dead. I have never thought what I would do or should do now that the end of his mortal life has come so suddenly. I think of him as more than my father. I think of him as a great man. A great man has a great mind. You know something of my father's great mind. Gandhiji came to him for advice and consultation, and many others came to him. Even the English when they knew they must set us free, came to my father to discover how best this should be accomplished. You have only to read the titles of his books, as I have just now done, to know that he belonged to the world and not only to India. He was in communication with some of the best western minds. Therefore—"

He paused. Now he must say it. He could not tell them the truth, which was that he simply could not—could not— He rushed on. "I have therefore decided that my father is not to be buried according to the old Hindu rites. It is time—I mean, I believe that we should consider the—the—nature of these rites. My father would not insist upon them—I believe that—had I been able to consult with him he would have agreed that the most civilised form of burial is that of interment, the body intact and returned to earth. I shall therefore employ the English method, and he will lie in the cemetery—"

They were listening, they were silent. He ended firmly and was about to leave them when hands caught him by the ankles. It seemed to him that hands stretched out towards him from all over the vast room and caught him. By the ankles they caught him and by the knees, rising around him in an overwhelming sea of stricken faces, their voices a chorus of protest, wailing at him, attacking him.

"You are stealing him from India—from us—our father, our beloved, you are sending him lonely among the foreigners! How will his soul come back to us if he lies among the English? The sacred waters of the Ganges are waiting to receive his ashes! What do the Books say of a son who does not respect the body of his father?"

He fended them off with anger.

"My dear ones!" he shouted. "Did not my father himself condemn ritualism? In the presence of Congress, long before I was born, but it is in the records—"

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"All who knew him will rise against you!"

This was the voice of his mother. She threw back the sari from her face and confronted him like a Fury, her black eyes blazing. He had never seen her other than gentle, loving, coaxing. It occurred to him now that she was also relentless, and for the first time in his life he was afraid of her.

"Mother," he exclaimed, "if you rise against me, the others will. If you are with me, if you understand me, then you will help the others. Mother, Mother, listen to me . . ."

For now she was attacking him with her fists, beating against his breast. He caught her hands and held her wrists. "Mother, hear me before you blame me! I cannot do it, Mother. I love my father not only because he was my father but because he was a great man, a great soul. How can I, because he happened to be my father . . ."

"Happen—happen!" she cried. "There is no such thing as happening. God made him your father, and you are his son. You take his place. No one can perform the sacred act except you. Do you think he will not know that you refuse him this last service? Is he a beggar, his skull to be shattered as though he were a beggar who has no son? Where is your conscience? Where is your knowledge of duty?"

She was sobbing great tearing sobs. He was distracted, desperate, half weeping. But Padmaya delivered him. She came forward quietly and put her arm about her mother's shoulders, and led her away.

Silence fell. The family sat and gazed at him with large reproachful eyes. He had forgotten how huge the eyes of his people were, mystical, accusing, sorrowful. He thought of Josie's eyes, so blue, so gay. What was there to reply to the dark eyes of his people? He shrugged, he made a gesture of dismissal. They rose, still silent, and stole away, the women drawing their saris across their faces as though he were a stranger, and he stalked out of the room and down the corridors, arched open corridors, to his own rooms.

Something must be done. The funeral could not be delayed beyond tomorrow or the whole town would be clamouring at the gates. His father was a national hero and people were already swarming in from the surrounding villages and even from other provinces. He could hear the murmuring clamour of people already encamped outside the gate.

A servant entered silently on bare feet and placed some fruit on a small table. He put his hands together in the symbol of reverence and Rashil inclined his head and the servant withdrew. Alone again Rashil sat motionless, not tasting the fruit, while the

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air warmed with noon and the scent of hot flowers drifted into the rooms. The quiet of the house was deceptive, even ominous. Usually the vast place was filled with sounds of laughter, children's voices, women calling to one another, head servants scolding their inferiors. Now they were all waiting, even the children hushed. They were waiting for him to decide what was to happen to his father.

Was this the same world in which he had lived until two days ago? Did Cambridge exist at this moment on the other side of the globe? He half believed that he had only imagined it, imagined Josie, too, her brisk voice and laughter faint in a distance beyond land and sea.

Someone was at the door. Padmaya came in and sank on a low couch. She slipped off her sandals and sat rubbing her beautiful bare feet, speaking not a word.

"Padmaya," he said at last, "do you understand me at all?"

She did not look at him. "Oh yes," she said almost indifferently. "I understand you very well."

"Am I wrong?" he pleaded.

Before she could answer he answered himself. "Right or wrong, it does not matter. I simply cannot do it."

"But you have seen it done many times," she reminded him. "When Grandfather died, and then Elder Uncle, and when we went to Gandhiji's funeral—it did not seem terrible to you then."

"I never thought I would have to do it."

She covered her feet with her sari. "Think of it like this—it has to be done—a practical matter. Otherwise the brain liquefies in the heat—it boils and—"

"Don't."

He cried out involuntarily, and she looked up at him, her great dark eyes inquiring. "What has happened to you in England, Rashil?"

He shook his head. "It is simply—a barbarous procedure."

She drew up her knees and hugged them. "Then you will not take your part in our father's funeral?"

"We can have an English funeral."

"We cannot," she said flatly. "If you refuse to do your duty we must have our eldest cousin take your place. But you know what that means."

"I know our mother will not forgive me."

"It is not a matter of her alone," Padmaya said in her practical calm voice. "It is a matter of the whole family. It means you abrogate your place as our father's only son and the head of his house. It means that our people will not trust you. Whatever

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you may wish to do in the future, they will not believe in you—how can we trust a man who wished to bury his father as an Englishman rather than—?"

"Surely I can be independent of—"

"Surely you cannot," Padmaya said in a low voice.

He gazed at her. While he had been away she had grown into a woman, her lustrous dark hair curled loosely about an exquisite face. Her features were more delicate, her skin was lighter than his. Kashmiri ancestry had made her skin fairer and her eyes brown, not black, and there were glints of gold in her brown hair.

"How do you know so much?" he asked.

"I have my own way of knowing," she replied.

"If you will not tell me—" he began, but she interrupted.

"I will tell you." She leaned her chin on her knees and stared across the room into some private distance of her own.

"While you were away I fell in love."

"You—in love?"

She lifted her head to look at him. "Does that seem strange?"

"No," he said. "Inevitable, of course, but with whom?"

"With an American," she said. "A good young man."

"Did he—?"

"Yes, he did love me. He does."

"So why—?"

"I told our father," she said quietly. "I told him everything. He was sympathetic. I thought at first he was willing."

"Then he was not?"

She reflected, her chin on her knees again. "I think he was willing—if he had been alone. Only no one here is ever alone. I suppose there is a penalty for that. No loneliness—no independence."

"Are you not lonely?"

"Oh yes," she said, "I am lonely, certainly—that is, I shall always be centrally lonely. But then—supposing I had defied Father and run away—I'd have been lonely in all the other ways. Also afraid."

"Afraid of what?"

"Well, he might have changed—the American, I mean. One never knows with someone not of one's own kind. And then it would be total loneliness. After all, this—"

She waved her right hand in a gesture which encompassed house and country. "It does not change."

"It will have to change some day," he declared.

She nodded. "That is what our father said. It will have to change. But out of itself, he said, not out of one person, like me—or you."

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"It must begin somewhere, this change!"

"Not here, Father said. He begged me not here. Not in his house. And I promised."

"You can't promise for me!"

"No, and you'll change, of course. But don't begin your change with him—at his funeral. He wouldn't want the family distressed, his family. It's not fair to take advantage just because he's dead. If he were able to speak to us, he'd say—"

"What?"

"Follow the old ways, for my sake. Just this one time. After that—go your way if you must."

She was very persuasive. Her soft Indian voice caressed while it spoke. He looked at her with new comprehension.

"You are not happy, Padmaya."

"No," she agreed. "But perhaps no one of our generation can be happy. We are the present, divided between past and future. We cannot expect to be happy. Some of us will decide for the future, some for the past."

"You have decided for the past."

"Like a bridge," she said, "part of me there, part of me here in this house, part of me—I don't know where. But I am glad I made our father happy. Now if you make our mother happy, our duty is done, isn't it?"

Duty again! He rebelled.

"She will not be happy unless we go back centuries."

"She will not be with us very long. What is a lifetime? Nothing."

He accused her sharply. "Padmaya, you are very Indian!"

She looked at him and he saw tears in her eyes.

"Yes," she agreed again. "Some of us must be—"

And as though they had reached an end, she rose, arranged her sari on her shoulder, and left the room. As she went it occurred to him that he had not yet read his father's letters. He had not dared to read them while he sat among strangers in the jet. What if he had suddenly begun to weep? Now he wanted to read them, now while he was alone.

Dear Sir,—his father wrote—*I wish my son to be encouraged to learn new ideas of sciences and industries, and so forth. In case his mind appears legal, it is well to include laws and government. We need much change. But he must proceed patiently. Our people can be led but not forced. For example, I wish to introduce an electric pump. First I must get electricity, and so forth. But most difficult, I must prepare my people for change, gradually introducing. My son must be taught what gradually means.*

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Admonishment, direction, persuasion, appreciation, this was his father's method. He found himself smiling as he read.

Dear Sir,—his father wrote—*I thank you that you are noticing my son's progress. I am glad he is not drinking strong liquors. As to his friendship with Miss Josie White, I hope it is not strong. Please advise my son to consider his family. I can change, as necessary, but my family*—

Ah, that was why his tutor had talked to him one day about marriage, so unexpectedly that he was confounded.

"I am not planning marriage, sir," he had replied.

"When you do," his tutor had said, carefully casual, "it is best to choose someone who will fit into your family."

"Yes, sir," he had replied, but inwardly rebellious. Now the rebellion was gone. His father understood so well and what was there to rebel against? Josie receded into the distance. Though only hours in time lay between them, yet the oceans and continents remained.

Dear Sir,—his father continued—*Please teach my son that he must learn to take my place as head of our family and our village. Our people will look to him, after my life.*

Had his father a premonition of this day? Or was it only the comprehension and the acceptance of the continuing recurrent wave of human life? He read the letters through and put them away in the small wall safe where the family documents were kept.

It was late afternoon. He sat beside his father in the motor car that was taking them to the junction of the sacred rivers, where the Jumna joins the Ganges. Earlier there had been ceremonies at home, to which he did not object. Now unless the cortège was stopped by the multitude of people, or unless they were slowed by the hundreds of followers on foot, they should reach the funeral spot before nightfall.

It was in fact half past six when they arrived. A great mound of sandalwood had been prepared for the flames. Rashil came down out of the car and, with his second uncle and two eldest cousins, carried his father's coffin to the pyre. They lifted the narrow box to the top of the mound, and then his uncle spoke for a few minutes.

"We are gathered here to see our dear one, the head of our house, enter upon his eternal life. He is one of the twice-born men. Although he professed at times to smile at religion, it was not religion itself which he held in contempt, but the frauds which have crept into it with corrupt men. We are Brahmanas, our family of the Brahman caste, and our dear one performed all rites according to the Katha school, thus proving that he believed

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in God. He followed in practice the rules taught him by his Guru and thus achieved early the state of being twice-born. The birth which such a Guru provides is real, it is absolute, distinct from ordinary arts and sciences, exempt in its final form from age and death. Since our dear one was perfect in this life, he will now pass to his next life, and to an experience far better than he has known here. Let his life be an example to us who are left behind."

With these words the uncle stepped back and took his place again among the family.

Now the moment had come which Rashil had dreaded and denied. Until this instant he had planned that he might still refuse to accept it. He went forward to the funeral pyre, he stood still, he turned his head to left and right. The evening was lovely in peace. The wide rivers flowed together, pellucid under the calm and golden sky. The sun had dropped below the horizon, but its rays shone towards zenith, brightening water and earth and the many faces of those who waited. It was the hour at which certain wild birds sing, those winged creatures who are silent except at dawn and sunset. Somewhere in the crowd a small child suddenly wept and the mother soothed it to silence. And before him was the pile of sandalwood, its fragrance scenting the air.

His travelling eyes rested at last on Padmaya. Her sari covered her head but she had drawn it away from her face, and her burning eyes urged and compelled him. But he was compelled by more than Padmaya. He was compelled by the waiting crowd, by the smoothly running rivers, containing within their depths the ashes of the dead. He was compelled by the very air, by the silence and the singing birds and the child's cry and the gentle comforting voice of the mother. Above all, he was compelled by the waiting people, his people. It was necessary that he comfort them in their sorrow, if he was to obey his father. He could not shock them further by refusing the rites to which they were accustomed and in which they believed. They had trusted his father and now he must offer himself for their trust, lest in dismay they be lost.

He stooped then and chose the sacrificial instrument from others to be used later. The fires would be intense but the human body is variable, and implements would be needed for those parts which burn too slowly. But the implement he needed now was the one he held in his right hand, a mallet of silver.

Holding it in his right hand, he ascended the pyre and stood for a moment, his face lifted to the sky. He was conscious of

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burning pain in every muscle and bone of his tense body, the friction of his will against his wish. He must lift the mallet. He must place the blow exactly where the skull would crack, but the flesh must not be bruised or broken. The treasure of the brain within the skull would liquefy when it reached the boiling point, and flow to mingle with the ashes of the body. Thus would the spirit proceed in peace, according to law, and without exploding the skull in rebellion.

Sweat poured from every pore in his body, nevertheless. He felt the evening wind cool on his wet scalp. His mind dimmed as he lifted his right hand. He looked down into his father's peaceful face.

"Father," he muttered, "Father—you understand—so I do it this once."

This once meant now, at this moment. He lifted the mallet and let it fall. He heard the crack and the split of bone. It was done. He threw the mallet far away beyond the pyre. There remained now only to light the sandalwood—this too his duty—and then he would stay until his father's body was changed to ashes . . .

Four days later, when the fires were dead, in the presence of his uncle he lifted the bones which had not burnt and carried them to the Ganges and threw them into its waters. It was evening again, the air was calm, and the river received the gift.

"*As many bones of a man as are contained in the water of the Ganges, so many thousands of years will he reside in heaven.* These are the words of the sacred books," his uncle said, as they stood together by the river.

Rashil did not reply. It occurred to him at this instant that the blow he had struck with such intensity of pain and rebellion was in fact a blow for the future, that future of which Padmaya had spoken. For he knew, even as he stood here beside the Ganges, that never would he allow his son, yet to be born, to be compelled to that moment of pain and rebellion. From that moment, he the father, would free his son. And suddenly, his duty done, the past fulfilled, he knew that he too, was free.

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NIGHT TRAIN FROM PADDINGTON

I don't suppose you know,
but I've got a place in Cornwall

BY DARRELL BATES

HULLO, Henry," I said. "You're looking very pleased with yourself."

Henry Coleporter hid his face behind a pint of beer. I hadn't seen him for a couple of years but at one time I had known him well. When he lowered his glass his face, I saw, had reverted to its usual gloom.

"I'm not," he said. "I'm feeling terrible."

I took his empty glass. "I'll get you another beer," I said. There was a burst of clapping as Parfitt hit another four. It was a Saturday and we were standing outside the Tavern at Lord's.

"What's the matter?" I asked when I returned. "Have you got a duodenal or something?" I could afford to be flippant with Henry. We had been at school together. He had been successful; I hadn't. It was another bond between us; I could sponge on him with an easy conscience.

"No, it's not that. Nothing like that."

The other difference between us was that Henry hadn't got much joy from his success. I, on the other hand, was a contented man. I didn't deserve to be, but I was. I taught music and mathematics at a small school in Somerset; an aunt had left me a little money. Henry was a stockbroker with one house in the country and another in Wilton Street, and three cars, and two continental holidays a year.

"It's . . ." He hesitated. He'll tell me in the end, I thought, he wants to get something off his chest.

"Something very disturbing has happened." He looked down into the froth. "Have you ever met my wife? I can't remember."

"Yes," I said. I drank the rest of my beer. "I was at the wedding . . ."

"Of course you were. Sorry. But that was—" his stockbroker's mind clicked into gear, you could hear the well-oiled, expensive mechanism—"eleven years ago."

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" Was it? " I said. " How time . . ." I let the cliché go. He would finish it. He knew them all.

" Are you doing anything this evening? "

" No," I said.

" Good. Then come and have dinner with me."

Henry was an awful bore really. He always talked about money, or the things you could do with money. But I'd get a good meal. I also wanted to hear his story. Very much.

" Yes," I said. " I'd like to."

He took me to a small place off the Edgware Road. " The food's good," he said, " and it's close." He usually ate at Prunier's but he had looked at my clothes. My trousers were baggy and not very clean. Henry was always impeccably dressed. It was one of several things I disliked about him.

". . . as I said, something very disturbing has happened."

I fiddled with my scampi. Thank God, I thought, he's off at last. He had spent the first half hour telling me about his super-tax.

" I don't suppose you know, but I've got a place in Cornwall. It's there that my wife goes in the holidays with the children. She doesn't like London much, she's a country girl."

" Oh yes? " I said. I sipped my wine. It was a white Montrachet. All I could afford with fish was chips.

" I spend the weekends there." He spoke with a city man's distaste for grass, and cows, and lizards on the wall. The only animals he understood were bulls and bears.

" Very nice," I said. Friday to Tuesday, that sort of thing. I didn't say it, though. I didn't want to put him off.

" Sarah is a quiet sort of girl. She doesn't go out much. She messes about with pottery, you know." He was apologising for her already. Sarah was his wife, of course.

" Well," he went on, " I was there last weekend, as usual. I go down on a sleeper on Friday, and then catch the night train back on Monday. It makes a break. What I do is to drive in to the station and leave the car in a garage nearby. The house is on the coast, a bit isolated. Sarah likes it. I left the house as usual at about half past ten— What's the matter? "

" Nothing," I said. I had choked on a piece of scampi. " Nothing," I said again. I washed it down with wine.

" Well," he went on, " where was I? Oh yes. I had a puncture. To make things worse, I found I hadn't got a jack. By the time I had stopped another car and borrowed one and changed the wheel, I knew I would miss the train. I thought of driving on to Plymouth or somewhere to catch a later train, but it was raining. In the end I drove back to the house. I couldn't

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telephone. We haven't got one. Sarah says it's the only way I can be free of stocks and shares." There had to be some explanation to make it clear to me that it wasn't due to poverty.

"You don't know the place, of course, but the house is on a sort of pinnacle overlooking the sea. You have to leave the car in the village. I didn't bother to put it in the garage. I left it in the carpark on the quay." It was only a Bentley, the rain wouldn't do it any harm!

"It was about half past twelve by the time I got home. It was still pouring with rain. There was some thunder too. There's a flight of steps that goes up behind the house, and then divides in two. One goes to the back—to the kitchen and all that. The one the tradesmen use. The other goes round to the front. When I got to the division of the steps, I stopped." Henry Coleporter looked at me. He was enjoying the drama, I could see. He was smiling.

"Do you know why I stopped?"

I didn't say anything. I saw with relief that he didn't expect an answer. He was just enjoying himself.

"I stopped because I heard a noise. There were no lights, but I heard a noise. It came from the kitchen. And do you know what the noise was?" I wished he'd stop asking all these rhetorical questions. "It was my wife, laughing."

"Good lord!" I said. I drank the rest of my wine in a single gulp.

"I'm afraid," he went on, "I did something then I shouldn't have done. I took off my shoes, and tiptoed in my socks down the steps until I was outside the kitchen window. The curtains were drawn but I could see the fire was still in. It made a rosy glow. Then I heard another sound."

He was staring at me in a funny sort of way. The waiter arrived with my steak.

I thought it was time I asked a question of my own. "What was it?"

"It was a man's voice."

"Oh," I said. "What sort of—?" I didn't finish the sentence. "Go on. What happened then?"

"There was a place where the curtain wasn't properly closed. I could just see a bit of the floor in front of the fire. I saw a foot, a bare foot, a woman's foot, and an arm . . ."

"What did you do?" I asked to keep the story moving. He was getting too involved in the details. I wanted to hear the end.

He continued as if I hadn't said anything at all.

"Just then a coal must have fallen from the fire, and there was a quick blaze of light. I saw the arm for a second, very clearly

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It was a thin, bony thing, covered in hair, like an ape almost." He looked with satisfaction at his own hands, large and capable and plump and white. " I suppose she was sorry for him or something."

" What did you do? " I asked.

" I didn't do anything. But I thought a lot.

" My first instinct, of course, was to bang on the window and make a scene. Or go round to the front door with my key and catch them flagrante delicto. But," he added, " I haven't got where I am by acting on instinct." He sipped his wine, a Burgundy by now. What a cold calculating fish you are, I thought. You used to be quite nice, when you were young and poor.

" If I made a fuss, two things would happen. Firstly, I would have to do something. I would have to take an attitude. Hit the other man, or beat my wife, a divorce, all that sort of thing, perhaps all three. I didn't want that, for several reasons. One of them was that Sarah is a good mother to the children, they love her. I couldn't separate them."

I didn't ask him what the other reasons were. I knew. He always had been a bit of a coward when it came to scenes and to the use of force.

" Yes," I said. " I see. What was the second thing? "

" I didn't—I didn't want to see who the man was."

" Why? "

" I didn't mind so much her being unfaithful. I've been unfaithful myself, several times. But I didn't want to know who it was with."

" Why? " I asked again. " Were you afraid it was someone you knew? "

He looked at me for some time before he answered. I began to wish I hadn't asked the question.

" No," he said. " It's not that. It's that—I don't know how to explain."

Now I thought I knew what he meant. I remembered again what he was like at school.

" You were afraid, weren't you, Henry, that it might not be just some poor fish your wife felt sorry for? That it might be someone who, despite your success and your money and your manly figure and all that, was, incredible though it may seem, a better man than you. Was that what you couldn't face, Henry? "

He pushed his plate aside, and lit a cigar. It took a long time.

" It's a bit crude put like that but, yes, I suppose that's what I mean."

" Well," I went on, " what did you do? "

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"I didn't do anything. And in the end I found that I was rather glad."

"Glad?"

"Yes, in a roundabout sort of way. You're a bachelor—you wouldn't understand. You're shy with women, I know. You always have been. I don't think you know how they work."

"Well, tell me," I said.

"Women are terribly possessive. They want to own a man. They can't bear him to have friends and interests outside themselves or the family. One's job, making money, that's all right. They'll accept that, and golf perhaps up to a point. It's conventional, it's U, it doesn't reflect on them in any way. But anything else, anything unfamiliar, and they will attack it or laugh at it or complain about it or—worst of all, perhaps—just be a martyr about it, until in the end you begin to feel so guilty that the thing itself is spoilt and turns sour, and you lose your pleasure in it."

"Like what?" I said. I had never heard him talk like this before.

"Like watching cricket on Saturday afternoon." He laughed, and then reverted to his normal gloom.

"And other things . . ."

"I still don't understand," I said, "what this has got to do with your feeling glad when you discovered—"

"Well, as I stood there in the rain and watched through the gap in the curtain, I suddenly felt free. I could do what I liked now. I always could, I suppose, in theory, but I wouldn't have any conscience about it any more. I would just send a telegram. GONE TO WHITE HART LANE—or the Oval or the Albert Hall. WON'T BE BACK TILL SUNDAY." He was smiling now, as he had been when I first saw him standing outside the Tavern drinking beer.

"Don't you think," I said, "that you may have jumped too quickly to conclusions. After all, all you heard was a laugh and a man's voice, all you saw was a foot and an arm. Perhaps your wife was just talking to someone—"

"No," he said at once. "I know. You can tell a lot from watching a foot and a hand for half an hour."

"So you just crept away."

"Yes. I crept away. I went back to the car, and I drove up to London. And yesterday I sent a telegram."

"What did you say?"

"I just said I wouldn't be home for the weekend. Just like that." He smiled again. "Do you think I did the right thing?"

I looked at him for some time before I replied. I also looked

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at my watch. It was just after nine. "Yes," I said in the end, "as a matter of fact, I do."

"Do you? I'm surprised. I thought you would say something else. About morality and love. You always were a bit of a prig. That comes from being shy with women, I suppose."

"Yes," I said. "I expect it does. But in this case I think you've done the right thing." I looked at my watch again.

"I'd quite forgotten," I said. "I've got to catch a train, at Paddington."

He frowned. "Why didn't you say so before? What time," he added, "is your train?"

"Nine fifty," I replied automatically, absentmindedly perhaps. I saw at once that I had made a mistake.

"Nine fifty? But that's my train, my night train to Cornwall. What are you doing on it?" He was full of offence, as if the train were his private property, and of suspicion, as if I were impinging on his domain.

"I'm going to see a friend." I hated to tell lies, even to Henry Coleporter.

"Oh," he said. "Oh. I see." He called the waiter for the bill.

Half an hour later the nine fifty drew out of Paddington station. I heaved a sigh of relief. I pulled up the sleeve of my coat and looked at my arm. It was true that it was thin and bony, and that the forearm was streaked with hair. But not like an ape's. That really was a bit much. I'd ask Sarah. She'd tell me. She always said what she thought. Always, in all the years I'd known her.

Dear Sarah. She'd be surprised to see me back again so soon. She'd wonder how I knew that she'd be alone. I wouldn't tell her what Henry had told me, of course. That wouldn't be fair. There are some things, after all, that one simply can't do to an old schoolfriend.

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PERFECT IDIOTS

The secret of the English does not lie in their intelligence, morals, erudition, or even their birth and riches. It lies in their courage to be what nature made them for. There is nothing vitiated or spoilt about them, nothing halfway or crooked. Such as they are, they are perfectly fulfilled human beings. That they may also sometimes be complete idiots I allow readily; but to be a really complete idiot is in itself something of an achievement.

GOETHE

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STARS IN HIS EYES

It was a colossal three-day holiday filled with parades, parties, and street-dances

BY HUGH B. CAVE

FOR THE record my name is Murdock, and having said it we'll forget it if you don't mind. There are some things a sober man of sixty-six shouldn't admit to being mixed up in, even though innocent. Concentrate, if you please, on the name of Callahan. James Joseph Callahan.

He arrived in St. Joseph City one blistering February day when the thermometer seemed certain to blow its top. That should have been a warning, I suppose: winter heatwaves in our little West Indies paradise are most uncommon.

But I didn't know him, you see. I was familiar with the leather-framed photograph on his Uncle Patrick's desk, and knew that for the past four years he'd been attending college in the city of Boston, Massachusetts, learning to be a bright young business-man, but I had never laid eyes on James Joseph in the flesh.

What I expected was a sort of youthful edition of Uncle Patrick. The lad I found at the airport was a head taller than Patrick and twice as handsome, with blue eyes full of deviltry instead of doubts. And whereas Patrick was still a bachelor at fifty-seven, this young fellow already had the loveliest girl in St. Joseph on his arm when he came smiling up to us.

"Jimmy and I met on the plane," Marie La Vallée explained, scarcely able to look away from the lad's face long enough to see us. She was the daughter of the best and best-liked doctor in the country and, like James Joseph, had just graduated from a college in the States. Not the same college, however. They hadn't known each other in America.

We took Marie home. Her father was Patrick's medical adviser and good friend. Then, because it was only three in the afternoon and Patrick would tolerate no tampering with routine, we drove James Joseph to the office. "Show him round, Thomas," said Patrick to me. "If I'm to leave tomorrow, I've work to do."

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I walked the lad about, watching his handsome young face for the first sign of distress. Nothing he'd studied in Boston could have prepared him for a St. Joseph business establishment, I was certain. In fact, I had serious doubts, and so had Patrick, about the value of anything at all that he might have learnt in college.

The fans whirred in the heat, stirring up more dust than air. Flies buzzed at the open windows. Outside, in the glare, horns blared and donkeys clip-clopped over the cobbles and irate drivers screamed at burdened peasant women to get out of the way. James Joseph seemed slightly confused.

I introduced our office force: Lucille Rigaud, who kept the books, Madeleine Grégoire who did the typing, and Mathieu Polvorel, our Customs House expediter. "An American-type organisation is not necessary or even practical here," I explained, prepared for his protests. "Business is most often transacted in the head or on scraps of paper at café tables."

He seemed distressed.

"There's a mighty lot to learn, even if we do seem small and primitive," I warned. "Actually, we're neither. I'll do my best to teach you. Thank heaven, you speak French." I frowned at him. "You do speak French?"

"The professor at college was doubtful," he replied with a wry grin.

I could only shudder.

Patrick had me up to the house for dinner that evening, and I couldn't help but wonder if it would work out. Patrick himself didn't think it would; that was obvious.

He was a self-educated man, of the firm opinion that colleges taught little but nonsense.

Patrick had been in St. Joseph thirty-one years. He had built the Callahan name up from nothing to one that was respected throughout the Caribbean. Now he was taking this young nephew in as a junior partner, and the prospect terrified him.

However, he had no choice. He was too old to continue to be active much longer, and furthermore he was ill. I was even older and looking forward to an early retirement. So a younger man had to be brought into the picture, and, except for James Joseph, who was there? Patrick's brother Michael, the boy's dad, couldn't be expected to give up a profitable law practice in Boston and come down here to learn importing, just to keep the Callahan firm in the family.

But a college boy, green as breadfruit and still damp behind the ears! How our business rivals must be rubbing their hands!

What Patrick hadn't foreseen, of course, was that the doctors

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would order him to the States for an operation so soon. They'd been after him for years, and he'd always been able to put them off. He had expected to be on hand to train the lad.

"Leave St. Joe now?" he'd spluttered, on the verge of apoplexy. "I can't leave now!"

"You're going to," Dr. La Vallée told him . . .

So it was up to me, and when I looked into James Joseph's innocent blue eyes I was a frightened man. He was a whiz at chess, his dad had written, and a demon on the football field, but rather less than spectacular with books. In St. Joseph we played other kinds of chess and football, and there were a thousand pitfalls awaiting brash young men who thought college had taught them everything worth knowing. How deep some of the pitfalls were, even I myself hadn't realised until I began answering some of his questions the following day.

"Why did you turn that fellow down, Mr. Murdock?"

"He's one of the sly ones, lad."

"But it didn't seem much to ask, if he has a shop at all. Just a few dollars' worth of goods on credit."

"A few dollars here, a few there—it adds up, lad."

"They can't all be dishonest," he protested.

"Ah, but they don't think of it as being dishonest. Just smart. It's a game they play, and they write the rules."

He jotted something down in a small notebook he carried, then fell silent and gazed out of the window, bored with it all, I suspected, and thinking of Marie La Vallée. Or of the Mardi Gras, for which our little island begins to make preparations weeks in advance. It was probably hard for him to concentrate on work in a land where everyone else seemed to be—seemed, I say, and that's one of the pitfalls—concerned mainly with having a grand good time.

Nevertheless, I managed eventually to introduce him to most of our important customers and point out to him our chief rivals, with a bit of information on each. And, as it turned out, his French was adequate. He might do, I told myself. He just might do, if he kept his mind on business.

Two weeks passed and we had a letter from Patrick saying the operation was over with but he faced a long convalescence before returning, and how were things going? An anxious letter, full of ill-concealed forebodings. Things were going all right, I reported. The lad seemed to be trying. I thought it wise not to mention that James Joseph was spending practically every evening with Marie La Vallée when he might more profitably be studying the company's books.

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We had a letter from the Fletcher Star Gold people, and I turned it over to the boy. Be good for him to handle it, I thought. They were almost as new to Caribbean trade as he was and distressed that we were not selling more of their products. We were their agents.

"They turn out a line of canned goods," I explained, "and our job is to persuade the shopkeepers of St. Joe to handle the stuff. We've bought radio time and newspaper space and what not, but it's a losing battle. Our biggest rival, you see, handles a line of canned goods too, and is keeping Star Gold off the shelves."

"How can he do that?" James Joseph asked.

"Oh, it's easy enough when you're Julien Nord. He's a big, big man in St. Joe, Julien is—a big importer, big politician, big everything. His hirelings have been coyly spreading the word for months that Star Gold products are second rate or worse."

"Are they?" he asked.

I smiled sadly. "Bless you, lad, no, they're not. As a matter of fact, they're better than Nord's in every way. Cheaper, too, because he pockets profits that would make us blush with shame. But the people believe what they hear, not what we try to tell them."

He was thoughtful a moment. Then he said, "Why not start a whispering campaign of our own, Mr. Murdock? I mean, if he can do it, why can't we?"

"I've told you. He's a politician, organised in depth for that sort of thing." I shook my head. "No, lad. Just write the Star Gold people a nice letter, telling 'em we're doing our best. Explain that building up a new brand name is a slow process here, because people dislike change. But we expect to do better as time goes on."

He made a trip to our warehouse, which was packed to the roof with Star Gold products we hadn't been able to move, and on his return to the office he actually seemed to immerse himself in work for a time. I mean he sat there with pencil and paper, scowling at the paper and covering it with figures.

When I looked up from my own work again ten minutes later, however, his session of concentration had ended. He was on the phone talking to Marie, telling her he would be over that evening. And the following day I didn't see hide nor hair of him until just before noon.

He had the decency to come straight to my desk with an apology.

"I'm sorry to be late, Mr. Murdock," said he, standing there with a guilty look, "but I've been on the run all morning.

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Marie—Miss La Vallée—is declaring herself a candidate for Queen of Mardi Gras."

"Is she?" I said. "Then I wish her the best of luck, and that's a fact. But what's it got to do with you?"

"Well, sir, Uncle Patrick is fond of her," he said solemnly, "and I ought to lend a hand where I can, don't you think?"

I'm not sure what I thought, exactly. Or even what I said. It was still murderously hot and I had a peculiar headache. I began to explain to him, I think, that a girl as pretty and popular as Marie would scarcely be needing his help, but before I finished I was gasping for breath and calling for a glass of water. Then all at once I was flat on the office floor in a cold sweat, twitching like a run-over chicken. . .

When my eyes focused again, they were gazing up at a hospital-room ceiling. I was too weak even to sit up. Absolute rest, Dr. La Vallée ordered. A man my age ought to know better than to work so hard in a heatwave.

James Joseph came over every noon to discuss the business with me, and often stopped by in the evening as well. In the evenings he was seldom alone. Marie was almost always with him: a lovely, lovely thing for a tired old man to see at day's end. It worried me, though, to see how much of the lad's mind was so obviously on the coming Mardi Gras festival and not on business.

St. Joe's Mardi Gras differs a bit from most, in case you don't know. In essence, of course, it's a colossal three-day holiday filled with the usual parades, parties, and street-dances; but the big thing in St. Joe is the naming of the queen.

Each year half a dozen of the island's prettiest young ladies vie for the honour. It's a lively contest, I can tell you. Every living soul from the president to the most impoverished peasant backs his favourite candidate with enthusiasm.

Opinions differ violently sometimes. Peasants have been known to do their debating with machetes, and I could give you the name of a senator who hasn't spoken to his twin brother since 1949 when they fell to insulting each other in public. But there wasn't likely to be much difference of opinion with Marie La Vallée running.

Even if the girl herself were not the loveliest thing that ever happened to St. Joe—and she was—she was the daughter of a man the whole island admired. With all his ability, Georges La Vallée was no pampered pet of the cocktail set, as too many of St. Joe's better medics tend to be. His office doors were open to the barefoot ones as well, and his fees were such that even they could pay them. Dr. La Vallée and his daughter were as well known in the city's crowded slums and

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the dirt-road country villages as any St. Joe politician, including our old rival, Nord.

Yes, Marie would be queen, all right. When she herself modestly expressed doubts about it, I simply brushed them aside. "What will you wear?" I asked, because the queen's costume is a matter of much import.

"Well," she said with a little frown, "I don't just know yet, Mr. Murdock. Jimmy and I haven't decided."

Jimmy and I, indeed! No wonder the lad's mind was not on business!

I was three weeks in the hospital, and Mardi Gras was only a week off when I got out. It wasn't until my second day back at the office, however, that I learnt the awful truth. In the mail was a letter from the Fletcher people, all jubilant. On the strength of James Joseph's recommendation they had gladly shipped us additional large supplies of their products, and they were delighted that we foresaw such a sizeable increase in the brand's popularity. I would have wound up on the floor a second time if Madeleine Grégoire hadn't rushed wide-eyed from her typewriter to grab me.

"What is it, Mr. Murdock?" she wailed. "Are you ill again?"

"Additional large supplies!" I barely managed to whisper. "And the warehouse is bursting now! The boy must be mad!"

She was a bright girl; had been with us a long time. She looked at the letter that had fluttered from my half-paralysed fingers and gasped, "Oh no!"

"Julien Nord," I moaned. "That villain will laugh us out of business for such a blunder."

And just then James Joseph came into the office, all brisk and businesslike, with a briefcase under his arm and a bright-young-executive gleam in his eye.

I was too weak to be forceful, but still had the use of my tongue. He fixed me with a solemn gaze while hearing me out, then frowned and draped himself on a corner of my desk, with a leg swinging.

"Mr. Murdock," he said earnestly, "I had a long frank talk with Julien Nord beforehand. I pointed out to him that he was overpricing an inferior product and thereby cheating the people, and we would give him a battle if he didn't mend his ways."

"Mend his ways!" I echoed feebly. "My sainted aunt!"

"You can't fool the people for ever, Mr. Murdock," he said. "Truth will out. I told him that."

"You told him that." I must have sounded like a parrot. A

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sick one. "And did you tell him how you propose to get our product into the shops?"

"Oh," he said with a breezy flap of his arms, "we can do that all right, Mr. Murdock. That's no problem."

I was on the verge of tears. "How? How will you get Star Gold into the shops? By giving it away?"

"Mr. Murdock," he soothed, "don't you fret yourself about it. You'll be having another attack."

Patrick, Patrick, I thought in panic, come home and straighten the lad out before he puts us in the poorhouse. Come and knock some sense into his lovesick head. Then I put my own head on my arms and groaned. What else could I do? There was no way to cancel the order; it was already on its way. We could only take our loss and charge it up to the education of James Joseph Callahan, who couldn't or wouldn't be educated. Patrick would die of shame.

Misunderstanding my silence, the lad patted me. "Don't give it a thought, Mr. Murdock," he said with affectionate concern. "You're not well, you know. . ."

The shipment arrived, and I walked James Joseph to the Customs House. It might sober him a little, I thought, to see what he had done. In any case there was much a newcomer to St. Joseph could learn in that awesome place, including how not to be flattened under a falling bale or run over by a hand-truck.

He followed me meekly on to the pier, where our mountain of cartons marked Fletcher Star Gold had been unloaded from the freighter. It was an even bigger mountain than I had expected, and I felt myself go weak at the sight of it. But James Joseph only tucked his thumbs in his belt and nodded with satisfaction.

"Fine, Mr. Murdock," he said. "Just fine."

"We'll have to rent storage space," I said with a groan. "You realise there's no room in the warehouse for this, don't you?"

"Oh, it can stay here in the yard; we won't have it long, Mr. Murdock," said he, without a care. "I was here talking to the Customs people the day before yesterday, and made all the arrangements."

Before I could answer—if there was an answer to such a statement—I saw a white suit bobbing along the pier towards us. Only one man in St. Joseph walks with that peculiar bounce, as if he had springs in his shoes.

I groaned again.

He came up to us with his panama tipped at a cocky angle, and

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a mocking smile on his round little face. "Ah, M'sieur Murdock," he purred. "And M'sieur Callahan. Such a pleasure. I see your shipment has come."

It was necessary to shake the hand he thrust out—in St. Joseph one must be polite always—so I did. James Joseph did too, with a grin. Then the three of us, standing in a row, gazed at the mountain of cartons in silence for a moment, and Julien Nord smiled his mocking smile again.

"Will you have enough, do you think, M'sieur Callahan?" he asked.

"I think so," said James Joseph solemnly. "None too much, perhaps, but enough."

"Ah yes. Well, if you find yourself in need of warehouse space, I can rent you some. You won't be needing it, of course." Despite the smile, Julien was in earnest now; the dainty fluttering of his hands was a sign I knew only too well. "Let me know, eh?"

"I will," James Joseph promised.

"By the way, I understand you are in need of special paper for the Mardi Gras."

"I am," said James Joseph with juvenile frankness.

"I've a few dozen rolls in stock, if you want them. I could let you have them at two dollars a roll."

"I've been paying a dollar in the shops," James Joseph pointed out.

"So I hear. But you've bought all there is, m'sieur. I have the only paper of that sort left in the city."

James Joseph pulled a face but went no further in protest. "All right, Mr. Nord," he said, surrendering like a lamb. "Send it over, will you?"

"With pleasure," Julien replied, chuckling as he departed.

I frowned at the boy. "Paper?" I said. "What sort of paper?"

"For the float, Mr. Murdock. And that reminds me—we've all sorts of work to do on the float. Would you mind very much if I took the next couple of days off?"

I would have been happier had he asked for the next couple of years off. "Take what you need," I said, gazing in despair at the Everest of cartons looming there above us. "Come back after the holidays."

St. Joe's Mardi Gras begins formally on the Sunday before Lent, with a parade through the streets of the city and every living soul who can get there lined up along the route to watch it. That's when the candidates for queen make their first public

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appearance, each on her own gorgeous float. No one is supposed to know until then—not officially, at least—who the candidates are.

I hadn't planned on going. When I closed up the office Saturday noon and took myself home, I expected to stay right there. I was still not well, and that mountain of Fletcher products in the Customs House yard had not helped to hasten my recovery.

But on Sunday I became restless. The problems I had carried home with me were too big a burden. I telephoned Georges La Vallée to ask his advice.

"We'll pick you up, Thomas," he said. "You'll be all right sitting quietly in a car."

He was not the sort of man to insist on a place in the reviewing stand, though I've no doubt he could have had one for the asking. We were fortunate, all the same. We found a choice parking spot on the Avenue de l'Indépendance, directly across from the National Palace. And there we were when the parade came weaving along in all its rainbow glory.

The street dancers in their bizarre costumes came first, each troupe prancing, bobbing, or shuffling to the din of its own musicians. The eyes were dazzled watching them and the ears could scarcely endure the din. Then came the commercial floats, plastered with placards advertising everything under the sun, and a-crawl with pretty girls blowing kisses. It was a sight to make a man years younger, I tell you.

The clowns and mummers streamed on by us. Men on stilts that put them halfway to heaven. A military band. Boy Scouts. Columns of young girls in uniforms so stiff you could smell the starch. Heaven knows what else. And then, at last, the special floats bearing the island's loveliest of lovelies, the girls who wished to be queen.

We knew the moment the floats came in sight who would win it, and I must say I began applauding even before the doctor and his lady did. She was truly a queen, that girl. The others were beauties too, mind you, but she stood out—ah, how she stood out! And James Joseph Callahan, bless him, had had the good sense to put her on a float that left no doubt of it.

The others were surrounded by flowers. You could scarcely see them for flowers. A beautiful sight, to be sure, but St. Joseph is a land of flowers; we see flowers in our gardens and for sale on the city sidewalks every day of the year. The float on which Marie stood bore not a blossom. Not one. It was simply a flight of steps, all of gold, and there she stood at the top—stood, I repeat; there was no gaudy throne for her to sit

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on—in a handsome white gown covered with small golden stars.

She saw us and waved, and had there been any question in the minds of that vast army of judges—which I doubt—her wave would have settled the issue, I'm sure. Let the others sit on their thrones like marble statues, straining with might and main to be beautiful. Our Marie was a pretty girl waving to her parents—alive, you see, and real. The handclapping swelled to thunder. The palace windows trembled so from the cheering that the sunlight seemed to dance on them.

The élite sat in their cars, nodding and smiling. The people—well, St. Joe is ninety per cent people who don't sit in cars, if you follow me, and in the wink of an eye they had done what they always do. The formal parade was over. The real one was just beginning, with a jubilant horde of humans escorting the float of their chosen queen through the city streets.

We couldn't leave. When you are fortunate enough to find a parking space near the centre of things, you sit when it's over until the traffic jam breaks up. Marie's father produced a small flask—"It's only brandy, but very good brandy; it'll do," said he—and we toasted the queen. Then we waited.

We waited an hour, watching the thousands of cars fight their way an inch at a time to the edge of the crush. When it seemed we could get away without a strain, Georges fell in line. But we had gone only three blocks when our route was barred.

What barred it was not cars but people. Marie's people. Her float was coming up the street we had to cross, and in front of it was a mob of admirers that filled the street like a spring flood. They beat on drums. They blew into bamboo tubes. They made the air shriek with trumpet blasts. They sang a song they had made up about her within the past hour, a Creole thing that acclaimed her as the Queen of Carnival, the Golden Girl of St. Joseph. They all wore little stars of golden paper, pinned to their clothing or pasted to their foreheads. Some wore a dozen.

It's the usual thing. I mentioned before, or think I did, that the queen's costume is a matter of great import to the multitude. They copy it, you see, to demonstrate their loyalty. If she wears red roses, they must have a red rose—once, at Mardi Gras, even the red roses in the palace garden were swiped when the supply ran out. If the chosen one were to adorn herself with mango blossoms, St. Joe would have a famine on its hands at mango time.

The float crawled by, and Marie waved to us again. "Look!" her mother gasped. "There isn't a star left on her dress!"

Georges patted his wife's hand. "She's taken them off and

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tossed them to the people," he said. "They were only just stuck on, you know. She's quite all right."

His lady subsided. The float disappeared and the mob thinned. We drove on home.

There in the doctor's modest living-room, with a telephone in his hand, sat James Joseph Callahan.

He finished talking, put the phone down, and politely stood up. "I thought I'd better come here to direct things," he said to Georges. "I hope you won't mind. It's a bit hard to get around down town." To me he said, "Ah, Mr. Murdock, you're feeling better!"

The all too brief reprieve was over. I gazed at him sadly and thought of his Uncle Patrick, the Fletcher people, and the Everest at the Customs House. I thought, too, of Marie La Vallée, that lovely, lovely young thing who loved him, or thought she did, but who was far too intelligent to entrust her future to a fool. It was such a pity. They would have made a handsome couple.

"I'm a bit better, thank you," I said. "Not much."

"I'm having a devil of a time getting trucks," said he. "They're all being used for floats."

"Trucks?"

"To haul the stuff to the shops, Mr. Murdock."

"What stuff?" I said, wondering if he'd gone a little queer. "What shops?"

"Why, the Fletcher shipment, Mr. Murdock. The shops are screaming for it. We've moved more than half the pile in the Customs House yard already, but I'm sure we won't have—"

The phone trilled and he picked it up. "M'sieur Denis?" he said. "Ah yes. You have? Well, of course, I'll try, m'sieur, but I can't promise; I just can't." He was speaking French, and quite nicely. "To be honest with you, our supply is limited, m'sieur. I simply didn't order enough." Down went the phone and he grinned at me. "They all want more, Mr. Murdock."

He was out of his mind and I knew it. "The shops are closed," I said. "This is a holiday. It's Sunday, as well."

He shook his head. "They're open, Mr. Murdock. I dropped a hint or two when I delivered the samples."

"Samples?" I echoed weakly.

"Just a few cans to each shop: the whole lot didn't cost as much as a newspaper ad. We had to have some on the shelves, of course, for people to see."

Georges handed me a tall, cool glass of something and I emptied it. To this day I don't know what it was. "The shops

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are open?" I managed to say at last. "And people are demanding Fletcher Star Gold products?"

"Mr. Murdock, you're not wearing a star," James Joseph said. "You ought to be, you know."

"What?"

"For Marie. You are a loyal supporter, aren't you?"

I'm slow, I suppose. And I'd been ill. But I finally got it, and my mouth dropped open. "You rascal!" I said.

"You must have a star, Mr. Murdock." He hurried off somewhere, to return with a Fletcher can in his hand. It was a can of peas, I think. Removing the label, he cut the gold star out of it with scissors.

He pinned the star to my shirt. "There," said he, beaming. "That's better, Mr. Murdock."

I took the thing off and blinked at it. Every Fletcher label had that handsome gold star on it. Every blessed one. "You rascal," I said again.

"He's not a rascal, really, Thomas," Georges said. "The Fletcher things are top quality and fairly priced, you know. He's done the people a favour."

"They're buying Fletcher cans for the stars," I said stupidly. "You bought up all the gold paper in the city."

"For the float," said James Joseph. "It took a fearful lot of paper, that float did, Mr. Murdock. All the gold paint in town, too, though there wasn't much of that around. But really, they're not putting out their good money for stars alone. They'll eat what's in the cans, you know, and find out how good it is."

I'm not a man for laughter much, and before I knew it my eyes were running like fountains. Mrs. La Vallée had to bring me a glass of water while Georges patted my back. When I recovered, James Joseph was on the telephone again.

"Pardon?" he was saying. "Who? Oh, yes, M'sieur Nord. Now, now, m'sieur, that isn't quite fair. I had a long talk with you beforehand, remember? Ah, but I didn't. You offered the paper yourself, and demanded double what it was worth, too. Really, m'sieur? Well, of course, I don't know much about politics here yet, or votes, but we had a politician in America once, quite famous, who said you couldn't expect to fool people for ever—"

The phone clicked and with a long face James Joseph turned to me. "Mr. Murdock, I wasn't rude, was I? I haven't made us an enemy?"

For that I loved him, and admired him all the more. Humility's a rare trait in bright young men of vision. And I'd have told him so, but just then an official car arrived, bringing Marie home from

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her triumphal tour of the city. And friends of the family began coming.

I stayed for dinner, and it was an occasion, as you can imagine. What a lovely, lovely thing the new Queen of Mardi Gras was, gazing at James Joseph as though her sun rose and set in him—or simply rose; the setting was nowhere in sight, obviously. You could hear bells in the room; I swear it.

Patrick should be here, I thought with a sigh. This would do him more good than all the medicine in the world.

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CLEOPATRA

see here mehitabel
i said i thought
you told me that
it was cleopatra
you used to be
before you
transmigrated into
the carcase of a cat
where do you get
this tut
ankh
amen stuff
question mark

i was several
ladies my little
insect says she
being cleopatra was
only an incident
in my career
and i was always getting
the rough end of it
always being
misunderstood by some
strait laced
prune faced bunch
of prissy mouthed
sisters of uncharity
the things that
have been said
about me archy
exclamation point

and all simply
because i was a
live dame
the palaces i have
been kicked out of
in my time
exclamation point

but wotthehell
little archy wot
thehell
it s cheerio
my deario
that pulls a
lady through
exclamation point

don marquis, *archy and mehitabel*

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A view of TOLEDO

By KATE O'BRIEN

IF ONE cannot have a table for two to oneself in a restaurant-car it is better to take a place at a four-seater. Between four strangers one or two may decide to talk; a fourth need not utter a word. But between only two, let one be sociable and the vis-à-vis has no escape, must react politely.

So it was with disappointment that Mrs. Reece obeyed the waiter and sat down at a small table opposite a Spanish gentleman. She wanted silence today—her own silence, that is; she did not care who or how many talked around her—only she asked to travel in peace this beloved journey from Irún to Madrid. She was delighted, as always, to be on this train, and alone on it.

In her carriage she had left her fellow travellers opening a basket, uncorking bottles, and taking wine glasses from little wicker cases.

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She would have liked that kind of luncheon too—but she never remembered in time that such things could be arranged. So she usually ended up, feeling bored and outside life, in dining-cars. Today, however, after a hot night in a sleeping-car, she required to eat and to drink wine. Besides, there was no telling when this rápido would reach Madrid.

They had passed Miranda and were in a valley of the Ebro. It was an end-day of October and the first time in her memory that she had not found Irún and the Bidassoa under sheets of rain. The golden Pyrenean morning had been a happy surprise; and now there was this long gold day. It was one o'clock; after Burgos they would be in Castile, and there should be daylight until seven. Almost there could be light to see Avila.

She told the waiter she would have a half-bottle of the red Rioja on the table. The Spanish gentleman was sipping an apéritif; his face was a mask, yet Mrs. Reece felt that he disliked what he tasted.

He signed to the waiter to remove it. Another apéritif was poured, and tasted, and the gentleman smiled at the waiter, who smiled at him. They knew each other; and the smile which broke only for a second across the cold, superb face, was as sweet as a boy's. Indeed it was startling; and the restored composure in the features it had briefly lit cast doubt on it.

However, Mrs. Reece ate hors d'œuvres in reassured comfort. She knew Spain, and she recognised that this man of unusually distinguished aspect was of very pure Castilian type; not only was, but likely thought of himself as such in his everyday habit, and with vanity. Castilian to the bone anyhow; and that meant, heaven be thanked, that unless she forced her attention on him, she would receive none of his.

Some children waved from a field to the train, and she waved back. Only in Ireland and Spain, she thought, do children wave to trains. Her grandson Liam was old enough to wave at the Macroom trains now—if Clare ever got him near enough down the road in his pram. Clare's birthday in a fortnight; she would be twenty-eight.

The waiter changed her plate. Sunlight fell warm on her hands and neck; she wanted to take off her jacket, but felt shy of the impassive Spaniard opposite. Movements were fussy; better sit still. She would find an attractive birthday present for Clare in Madrid—Clare took such pride in having been born in Madrid that she deserved nice presents from Spain. Indeed, the girl deserves nice presents from everywhere, her mother thought, and smiled with love.

The Spaniard appeared to be observing her. Perhaps he considered her amusingly foreign, but she did not care. Still she must observe him on the quiet, because in his racial perfection he was more like a symbol than a man, a touch unreal, perhaps just a shade comic. But no—that wasn't fair; he was in everything—his black clothes, his fine grooming, his total reserve—simply a

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civilised person. And indeed, as to nobility, had he a beard he might have been taken for one of those mourning hidalgos who bend immortally about the dead Count Orgaz in that little church in Toledo.

Toledo. Would she perhaps this time revisit it? But the familiar, *No, no,* so silly, so feeble and unexamined still, passed over her nerves. She returned to thinking of Clare's birthday and of Madrid; and to the omelette on her plate.

No sight of Burgos yet. How blessedly long this journey took! Anna had not remembered noticing before that poplar trees could fade with so much passion—great slashes of hard green still heaving up their centres through the tumbling fragile gold. She wondered if those few scattered ones across the river from Avila were also dying in clamour—but she would not be in Avila in time to see. Madrid first—always first.

Clare, she mused—her musings often took the form of monologues to Clare, who was unwittingly the confidant of lonely hours—Clare, I think you wonder why I return always to Madrid. I wonder too. Since what it chiefly holds for me is Robert's grave. Robert, your father—who died before you were two . . .

There were slices of veal and many kinds of vegetables on the large dish the waiter presented to her. She felt tired of eating now, but she accepted a slice of meat and some French beans. The waiter seemed disappointed, and urged his many other beautiful vegetables upon her, so she had to make a full speech of apology, explaining truthfully that after eating the lovely omelette he had given her she wanted little else. He smiled his forgiveness.

But her vis-à-vis had laid his hand on the waiter's sleeve, and bent upon Anna his startling, boyish smile. "Forgive me," he said, "but you make a mistake. The vegetables are the best part of this curious travellers' picnic that we endure."

"I'm sure they're beautiful," she said, "but—" she smiled and shook her head at the waiter, who however was not yet allowed to go.

"These very small onions," went on the El Greco character, "are quite excellent. I am eating them—see?—and I am hard to please. Give the lady some of those very small onions," he said to the waiter.

But Anna thought this direction excessive, and declined the onions with a finality that at least the waiter understood. And she tried not to smile too broadly to herself. These figures out of Old Masters, fussing about onions—ah well, the intention was friendly, if comic. So she smiled, as to say thank you, at the Spaniard.

He was looking at her with something like annoyance. The radiant smile was nowhere. "You should have had some onions," he said severely.

"You are very kind," said Anna, as dismissingly as she could.

"I have been intrusive?" he asked.

She smiled again; but she feared that barriers were down now, through no fault of hers.

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" If I may intrude further," he said, and she did not see how to indicate that he might not, " you speak good Castilian. You must know Spain well? "

" Yes, I know Spain. I lived here once, for four years—and since then I visit it often."

Why so informative? she asked herself in annoyance. All that civility required was, Yes, I know Spain. Now you are in for conversation.

And she was. Though not at once. Her " often " dropped into a pleasing silence; but as she ate and kept her eyes down, or diverted towards the window, she knew that she was now being examined by the Spaniard—severely no doubt, but also, she suspected, with a curiosity which was not perhaps perfectly hidalgo? If so, he was welcome. She was a reasonably contented woman, past the age of youth, going about her own business. This passer-by seemed to be about her own age—and he was a marvel of beauty and distinction to the eyes; pleasant enough, too, in his odd way. Yet what was it about him that was exasperating her? Why had he been on her nerves since she sat down?

They were passing through small vineyards, mostly stripped—but here and there a woman was at work. Eastward, nearer to Logroño, Robert used to find himself happy in summer, in Navarra and round Pamplona. It was in a village hereabouts, near Burgos, that someone, amused by his fluent foreign Spanish, had asked him if he was Catalan. " Catalan de Cardiff," he had answered in delight. And the last poem he wrote came out of that phrase.

You will admit, Clare, she went on, that I do not habitually mug over the faraway past like this. But it does happen to me when I set foot in Spain. After all, it's the reason why I come to Spain—that long ago. And it was the best of all my life, my years with Robert here, and the years of your babyhood, Clare darling. So it would be churlish of me not to sentimentalise about them now and then.

The fruit the waiter brought looked attractive. She chose a pear. " I'm late for the figs," she said to the waiter.

" Alas, yes, madam. And our oranges are not yet."

" But these local grapes are excellent," said the vis-à-vis. " You must have some."

For the sake of peace, remembering the onions, she allowed the waiter to give her a few; and noticed that this symptom of docility gave pleasure across the table.

" You like our figs? " the gentleman asked.

" The green figs of Castile—in September! There isn't a fruit on earth that can compare with them, I think."

He nodded. " The green are the better. You are right."

" I used to eat them by the kilo—long ago. Disgusting."

His eyes glinted as if he saw a far-off joke. " When was this ' long ago,' in which you learnt to speak our language and appreciate our green figs? It cannot—" he smiled chivalrously—" it cannot have been *very* long ago? "

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"Long enough. I was only a month or two married when my husband, who was a journalist, was sent to Madrid by his news agency. We came to Spain just in time for the abdication of Alfonso XIII—so Robert was busy from the word go! Heavens, we were confused those first weeks!"

"Indeed you must have been!" He laughed with great friendliness. "That was a terrible year."

She did not answer—ate her pear.

"You are English, both?"

"No, indeed. Robert was Welsh, and I am Irish. And we met in Paris. We were married there."

The Spaniard hesitated, but then asked his question. "Your husband *was*—you say. You are then a widow?"

"Yes—many years a widow. My husband died—in Madrid."

"Ah, but how tragic! And both so young."

"Yes, it was tragic—we knew that."

"'We?' You mean?"

"Robert knew he was dying—he died very quickly and in shocking pain—sepsis through a cut finger. There was no penicillin then—and they couldn't save him. And he died in a rage against life. I was with him all the time—I saw, I know."

"You must hate Madrid."

"No. It gave me too much, too quickly. I love Madrid."

"Your husband was a good writer?"

"He was going to be. He was a very good journalist. He had written poems and short stories. But he was only thirty when he died."

"So." A pause, and then said the Spanish grandee, "You were of course dependent on his—his earnings?"

Anna smiled. The quite vulgar curiosity was amusing her now.

"Entirely. And perhaps we depended on what I could pick up for an occasional spree. You see, I was already trying to write at school in Paris when I first met Robert—and I had kept on trying—which turned out to be just as well . . ."

"You had children?"

"One—a daughter. She was not quite two when he died."

Absentmindedly she accepted the cigarette the Spaniard offered, and took light from his lighter. The heavy, darkly-carved ring struck her attention uneasily—but her memory was engaged on an old track. She was not going to tell the Spaniard that three days after Robert's death she lost the five-months-carried child that they were sure was going to be their son. Taffy, Robert used to call the unborn. Taffy, the lucky little thing.

"I have saddened you," said the Spaniard.

"No, no," she said, annoyed. As if you could, you gossipy stranger.

"Your life has been hard then?"

"On the contrary—rather lucky and amusing. I became a successful novelist—which might have surprised Robert. And my daughter has always been a great delight and a great friend."

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The Spaniard smiled very endearingly. "That is a sweet way to describe a daughter," he said.

She liked the observation, and smiled back. "I shall tell Clare you said so," she said.

"Do. I also have a delightful daughter, who is married and, alas, lives in Holland."

"As Clare, alas, lives in Ireland."

"I am, like you, widowed—but only since three years ago. I wear all this black today because I must descend from the train at Medina del Campo to attend to the obsequies of a dear cousin."

The waiter poured their coffee, and the Spaniard asked him about liqueurs.

"I have to travel about Spain sometimes in my work, but since my marriage, twenty years ago, I live in Madrid. You are travelling now to Madrid?"

Anna nodded.

The waiter brought some bottles of liqueurs. The Spaniard invited his vis-à-vis to take a liqueur, but she refused politely. He grew wilful, and amusedly she remembered the onions; but she still refused. He poured in real temper, and she thought of the dead lady who for twenty years had had to eat and drink every mortal thing this petulant character suggested—oh, and plenty besides eating and drinking, she thought with a soft laugh. How spoilt he is! How irritating he could be! She noticed his ring again, on the annular finger of the right hand. Curious, dark gold, all in one heavy piece, with some effigy deeply carved into the rough centre. She must have seen something very similar, long ago. It troubled her.

"Not even a simple Spanish coñac?"

"Thank you truly—but no. Not at this hour of the day. After the tiring night it would be sure to make me sleepy—and I never want to close my eyes for a second on *this* journey!"

They both laughed, though he was still not forgiving her about the liqueur.

"You have friends in Madrid to go to?"

"Yes, many—but not to go to, as you say. I travel my own way. I like hotels; small, good hotels."

"We have such in Madrid."

"You have indeed. And this time I'm going to a not so small one, but very good. Anyway, I love it, for old times' sake. The Florida."

He looked suddenly annoyed again—and his eyes took on what she was beginning to call their interfering look. How handsome he is, the crosspatch, she thought. Whom does he remind me of? Someone I've something against?

"It is a very good hotel," he said coldly.

"Robert and I used to meet other journalists there sometimes, if we had money to spend. It was always fun. And then afterwards, if he'd been alive, he'd have been in and out of it during the siege."

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"Doing what?"

"Just soldiering—helping Madrid if he could."

"A foreigner," he said, and his voice seemed to ring off the steel of his face.

Ah, how fatuous her mistake! Too much wine, too much talk of the dead past. Too much prodding of memory by this irritating, unknown man.

"I am very sorry," she said. "I should not have spoken of your war to a Spaniard."

"No clearly you should not," he said. "I fought in the Alcázar, in Toledo."

"Ah!" Anna looked straight into his glittering eyes; and wondered with shock why their anger and beauty seemed now to blaze out of her own past. "I am very sorry," she repeated. "I most truly beg your pardon."

She did not wait to see if his expression changed. She was troubled now by more than her clumsy gaffe. Her luncheon bill lay in front of her; she opened her purse and put down the necessary money quickly, rising as she did so.

He rose too. "Please," he said. "It is all right. It is long ago."

"Thank you," said Anna. "That is kind of you. Good-bye."

He was putting out his hand—she noticed the ring—when the waiter intervened at his elbow. "Don Modesto," he said, "the gentleman at table number twelve wishes—"

Anna left the dining-car and made her way back to her carriage. Don Modesto.

As she reached the door of her compartment the train was slowing into Burgos; the two of the luncheon-basket were preparing to dismount, so she stood in the corridor to let them pass and answer their friendly adiós. She watched them along the platform, and then stood, as always, to look across the westward roofs of the town at the twin towers of the Cathedral until, lacy and light, they vanished along the horizon.

There was only one young man in the carriage now—asleep. She got back her earlier corner seat, huddled herself into it. She shut her eyes.

Modesto. The foolish and unusual name. How slow she had been! If the waiter had not said, "Don Modesto"—just as the taximan had said it in Toledo the first time she heard it—would she ever have joined the silly certainties together?

Psychiatrists have said that we forget what pride insists we forget—our silliest moments, or most humiliating or simple hours. She had not found that to be true. And in fact she had not forgotten the event. The partner in it—yes. In outward fashion she must have forgotten. But *two* can forget, thank heaven! And Don Modesto was a natural forgetter, at an easy guess.

Anna lit a cigarette, took up a book. But after a minute laid it open on her knee. The landscape she adored was creeping forward, tawny Castile.

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IN June of the year before he died, Robert and she had taken their baby daughter to Robert's parents in their lovely seaward-looking farmhouse near Aberdovey. They thought their hearts would break because they had to leave her there to spare her the Madrid summer. Robert would return for her in October. Anna went from Wales to Ireland for July, and was glad she did so because her father died while she was in his house.

Back in Madrid in burning August she had felt uncertain, cross, unhappy. Robert and she were astonished to find how much at sea they were in all their ways without their baby. Robert, alone for five weeks and very lonely, had had a wild and untidy life, so that their shabby, high-perched old flat had lost all vestiges of grace and order. Anna had had to slave to restore it; and the night and day temperatures were hardly to be borne.

They seemed too to be especially hard-up that summer. Anna got rejections of work, and Robert was feeling out of luck, wanting to chuck the job and go and freelance in Catalonia or in Asturias. To that end he was trying to sell some manuscripts to an American group, and was running about town in extravagance with their talkative representatives, seeking to charm them. He was indeed enchanted to have his Anna back . . . had she any idea of what those five weeks had been without her? She had, but she did not say so. And always they were in love, and both made efforts to control their heat-exacerbated nerves.

But Anna was every bit as lonely for Clare as Robert was, and also she grieved much for her father. So there were in that torrid weather a few frightening moments of pause between them, moments in which each realised with panic that they too were actually being hard-hearted against each other, and even sometimes quite coolly disinclined to be anything else. This was a condition of feeling which in their hard and passionate years of marriage neither had hitherto experienced—and when each time it was flung aside and overcome, it threw them into extravagances of contrition and love-making and present-exchanging which they were hardly able for—so hot was the weather, and so hard-up were they.

Then in the first week of that September Anna had a stroke of professional luck. She got a letter from a publishing house in Boston asking her to write for them ten thousand words on Toledo, for inclusion in some travel book; and the fee offered was very large for a beginner. She and Robert were cheered and delighted. The only faint awkwardness in their pleasure was that the Boston publishing house was that very one to whose representatives in Madrid Robert was so determinedly trying to sell his work. However, it was a great piece of luck; and when they had answered the letter the two went out to celebrate, and tell their friends. Foremost among them, although Anna did not care for them much, were Jack and Helen Darby, those very representatives in Madrid of the Boston house which had signalled to the unknown Anna.

Anna knew that her news would please them only with reservations, and although their manners were sweet and easy she saw

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them thinking out their slight shock. However, she had thought, it will only make them more earnest in promoting Robert's work . . .

That evening in the Villa Rose Café they were eager to persuade Robert and Anna to go up into the Sierra with them in their car—they had hired a little hut high up in the cool pinares this side of La Granja. They would shoot and camp and rest up there for a week or more; it would be life-saving.

Anna agreed that it was indeed exactly what Robert must do. She could see his eyes shining like a child's. She could also see Helen Darby's popping, not so attractively, in determination to have " my Welsh honey " in her Guadarrama party. But Anna was not troubled. Cunning Robert might be fakely sweet to Helen for his base, commercial reasons—but he was outright a man for beauty, and Anna had nothing to fear from Helen Darby. The sweet pine-mountains and cold streams, calling of birds across high silences of dark blue nights—all would indeed refresh her tired, dear love. But she—oh no. She must do this work.

Yes—but yes, they all protested—you must do it up there, in the cool. You know Toledo like the back of your hand. A guide book, a good history, and your own knowledge of the place—and it will be all the better for being written in cool air, pleaded Jack.

No, she would stay in Madrid—and Robert must be off tomorrow to the mountains. When she had thought a bit and planned out her article, she would probably go to Toledo for two or three days before she wrote it.

Robert was tender and self-reproaching as he said good-bye to her the next morning, in their already burning-hot apartment. But she was truly glad to see him go to the mountains he adored.

The next evening she took a train to Toledo It would be no cooler than Madrid but was so very much smaller that, tourists or not, it would have a relative kind of quiet, and in Doña Conchita's deep, dark house she would not be sleeping with only a few scorching old tiles between her and the summer sky. Doña Conchita's was not a registered lodging-house, but she would put up favourite people from time to time, for little charge, and in good comfort. Robert and Anna were favourite people.

Toledo, city of marvels and of proud and shabby simplicity, was always a place Anna entered with glad wonder and with quickened heartbeats. But she did not delight in it as Robert did; she did not love it as she loved Avila and knew she always would.

" Give my love to the boring old hole," he had said to her mockingly.

" Not boring, Robert! But—just too arrogant."

" Unlike shy little Avila? "

They were on a familiar joke.

" Unlike Avila—and as for that silly word, shy! "

" Well, anyway—keep your dislike of the miserable place out of your article."

That would be easy, she had thought, as she mused across Plaza de Zocodover in radiant morning, criss-crossing tourist groups and

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sometimes getting mixed with them. She had felt holiday in the general air, and received more than her share of murmured, "Guapa!" (Beautiful) and "Ola la Rubia! (Ah, blonde!) from young men. She was well used to this Spanish mannerism, and found an amusing politeness in the compliment, so gently and with such detachment was it offered. It never ruffled her; nor, as she knew, was it meant to.

But today, she began to notice with amusement that it came, here and there through the town and at intervals that shortened, from one voice, and from one astonishingly handsome young man. After a time the persistent, sudden compliments ceased to amuse her. This was not the customary, passing tribute. This was someone wanting to pick her up. Just as she was beginning to feel cross, however, the murmuring voice and the beautiful face were gone. It was a Greco, and also a silly character with nothing to do.

She devoted the late afternoon to a dutiful recapitulation of the Cathedral—not merely those parts of it that she always delighted to visit, but also the details of the Tesoro, and the Sala Capitular. She was studious, she noticed no complimentary murmurs from crowding tourists—and she forgot entirely the beautiful young man of the early day.

When she came out by the North Door she was tired and thirsty. Across the street where there were now many people she thought she saw the El Greco figure, far away. She turned off gladly towards the cafés of Zocodover, found a shaded corner, and asked for a very long iced lemonade. As the waiter brought it, another shadow fell across her table. It was that of her admirer of the morning, who bowed to her gravely before he seated himself nearby.

She was too tired to be annoyed and she was oddly pleased with him. She thought he merited some civility, so she smiled to his grave bow. And then he smiled at her, for the first time that day—and the sheer brilliance of his smile, its isolated quality of beauty, startled her.

They were friends then; Pax they seemed to say, as children do. And asking her permission, without words but with his whole graceful body, he came and sat at her table.

He set himself to entertain her, and to find things out about her. In quick conversation the hidalgo gravity changed to an easy sweetness, almost brotherly, Anna thought with amusement. He was Toledano, of very ancient family, descended through his mother from Moorish princes, through his dead father from a chamberlain of the court of Henry III. His people were ruling class in Toledo since Isabella la Católica.

"And we still are," he said, half-mockingly. His mother, his brother, and he lived in stately poverty, Anna gathered, on one floor of the family palacio—level with their own escutcheons. The rest of the house was let. He had studied law at Salamanca, and at present was considering what next to do.

He disapproved of her drinking lemonade after so hard a day of

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sightseeing. " I watched you," he said, " and you are tired. You need sustenance."

He stopped a waiter.

" I am asking him to give you an horchata."

She laughed. " But, thank you, no; I don't want horchata."

" You don't know what it is."

" Indeed I do—it's a rich almond milk drink—and I truly couldn't bear it now."

" But *I* think you should have it," he said.

" Thank you again," she said, and shook her head at the waiter, who accepted her negative and went away.

The young man seemed annoyed. Silence lay over them briefly. " You are much at your ease," he said. " You speak Spanish well."

She told him she had lived for three years in Madrid. He asked her if that was a wedding-ring on her left hand. Yes, it was. Her husband was an English newspaperman. In Spain, he told her, the wedding-ring was worn on the right hand. Yes, she had noticed that—in three years.

He frowned. He twisted a heavily-carved old ring on his right annular finger. " I am not married," he said severely. " I shall be, naturally."

Anna was getting bored, and had something on her mind to do while the evening light was still dominant above Toledo. She caught the eye of the waiter and, as she stood up, gave him what she knew without asking was the right money.

The hidalgo, very El Greco now, sprang to his feet.

" I am here to work," Anna said. " That rest was all I needed. Adiós! "

" But no! " He handed some money to the waiter, and strode with her. " What do you do now? "

A bit tired of him, she lost her head. Instead of saying that she was going back to her lodging to work, she told him her true intention.

" I want to get a view of Toledo from above the Ermita del Valle," she said. " I'm taking this taxi—good-bye, señor."

He smiled his radiant smile.

" But of course—what a splendid idea! The best of all views of Toledo! "

His hand was on the taxi door handle.

The driver beamed on him. " Where to, Don Modesto? " he asked.

Indeed from above the Ermita, Toledo looked that evening as if one had dreamed it, or as if it could not stay in focus. Not El Greco's dark city, but gold on lesser gold on floating grey and wisps of white; shot through by lines of terrible radiance; towers, spires, and belfries converged on one lovely, gilded pinnacle—above hardly visible ravines, wide valleys full of ancient peace—calmly uplifted to the commanding sky.

They climbed high over the rocks above the Virgen del Valle.

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Southward he showed her the village of Orgaz—" . . . where the Count came from," he said with pleasing innocence. Westward the sun touched Talavera de la Reina.

" Avila must be up there," Anna said, looking north-west. But all the plain stretched off in such a golden peace as to contain the known world and put it to sleep. Anna was visited by one of her moments of hardly bearable love for Spain. She spread her arms and herself against the small crooked dolmen-rock that she was leaning on; the warmth of the stone answered her pleasure, and she stroked its surface so as to feel its grain.

Don Modesto stood apart and watched her. " What waste! " he said. " You seem as if in love with a mere rock."

" I am in love with being here," said Anna.

" And so am I—and more than you are," he answered.

Therefrom he wooed her. With a cool insistence, refusal to be sidetracked, refusal to be angered, he made clear his intention to possess her. He thrust no caresses on her; he grew neither hot nor self-pitying. Simply, as she moved away from her rock and here and there over the dried, flowery grasses of the hill, he moved beside her, and with declaration and flattery, with question, insistence, and every inflection of tenderness—obstinately, sometimes with a comic petulance, but for the most part along a vein of well-mannered and disarming insistence—he told his sudden love.

He did not touch her, save politely to help her over a place. They lighted cigarette after cigarette, and pausing to do so each laughed into the other's eyes. Once he did pick up her hand as if it was a flower he had suddenly noticed, spread it out on his own, gave a slight shudder of appreciation, and let it fall.

Into his stream of love-talk Anna broke again and again, and had her say; and he was very happy to stand and listen to her, and cut in with accurate questions against her hesitant arguments. But he never withdrew from his declared intention to sleep with her and possess her.

Anna, contradicting him, laughing at his cool demands, and sometimes trying half-heartedly to hurt or insult him, knew that she was now enjoying this unforeseen encounter. And at the same time she felt safe in it. She was, almost to exaggeration, non-promiscuous in feeling. She knew always that she would never be unfaithful to Robert. Often she knew that with rage—because, sweet lover that he was, her husband was a wild boy too, took unannounced liberties of a day or a night sometimes that she was too proud to ask about; and in general, as to work and freedom and opinions, as well as about sexual rules, was a sweeping adherent of the double standard.

She and he had quarrelled often on principle about that—she never brought the general argument into their strictly personal rows. But though she sometimes resented the certainty of her own fidelity, she knew that this was no virtue in her but a happy accident. She knew she was at her happiest in loving Robert, and that he did truly deserve every vestige of her love. And

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now with Clare between them—small enchantress of their joint worship—Anna accepted that she was bound for life. Within a ring of fairy grass, dangerous to step out of.

Besides, she was used to men. Since her student days in Dublin she had known their clamours and stampedes, and the touching importunity of their vanity—above all their vanity on this one subject now being discussed with such striking calm on the skyline above Toledo—the vanity in each of his unique power to delight the other sex—given the opportunity, of course.

Her head bent, her smile still deep, she counted the points in his favour, and decided that her foolishness might be excused. But enough was enough.

She lifted her head, and stood up. "Look," she said, "it grows cold now. And that taxi waiting at the Ermita is my expense—as we agreed on the way up—and I can certainly afford no more of its patient waiting."

"Of course, it grows cold. How unkind of me!"

They began to walk downhill.

"May I offer you a lift to Toledo?" Anna said.

He laughed. "Comedy player, that is not your taxi. You are with a Spaniard."

Yes, she thought as she got into the car, and it is nice to be with a Spaniard, just for once.

On the way back the argument narrowed to the simple one of how she was to amuse herself for the evening. It was too early to dine now—only eight o'clock—but he presumed, hoped, she had no plans for dinner? She had not. She took only breakfast at Doña Conchita's, and ate as and where she pleased. Then she must dine with him.

"With your mother and brother? Behind your escutcheons?" That would have amused her.

"Indeed no! How it would distress Mama to have a guest to dinner now! No. But if you will meet me on the terrace of the Café Suizo at ten, I'll take you to dine in a truly Toledan and equable place."

Only when she had promised to do this did he let her give the taximan Doña Conchita's address.

Back in her quiet lodging she realised that she was both very tired and feeling unusually gay. She flung off all her clothes, and soused herself, soaped and sponged herself with lazy pleasure in the near-warm water that came out of the hot tap; she walked streaming wet about the tiled floor, and brushed her hair, and sang.

"It's been a full day," she mused. "I must send a postcard to Robert—and one to Clare. I wonder which they'd like?" She eyed those she had bought during the day, and when she was dry and in a dressing-gown she sat in the window, selected the two best for her two darlings—for Clare, far off in Aberdovey and likely to eat the card in delight, she chose the laughing White Virgin of the Cathedral Choir—wrote them both with care and love and many kisses. *I'm dining with a pick-up tonight—he's*

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lovely to look at, she said on Robert's. Then she lay flat on her bed and opened a book.

But Don Modesto came between her and her reading. He had clearly engaged her attention—indeed she admitted that she was in some measure charmed by him; but she could not make him out.

Had he been simpler, more awkward, more distressed, Anna would have been willing to believe in some kind of love at first sight—for he was young, younger than she. But he wasn't like that. He was an observer, and approver, of his own feelings. He seemed as if scientifically in love. Which was not very Spanish.

Spanish. An explanation might lie there. He would not be free to pursue his lusts and experiments among the young ladies of his race or city. And she guessed he would have no desire at all for a gipsy or a prostitute. So perhaps a foreign lady, a safely-married foreign lady—Anna smiled. He was unlucky this time, she thought—Irish ladies being very like their Spanish sisters in taking seriously the Church's rulings on chastity and continence. Poor boy, how was he to know? She returned to her book. And at half past nine while she dressed and made up her face she realised that she was hungry, and looking forward to seeing Don Modesto again.

As she dropped her postcards in the letterbox in Zocodover she saw him watching her; he waved like a boy as he came hurrying towards her from the café.

"How miraculous you look!" he exclaimed. "How radiant! As if you'd just sprung out of a fountain!"

She thought, but did not say, that if that was true of her, it was no more than his own handsome and distinguished appearance deserved for partnership. For he was looking wonderful—and if a shade filmstar, what harm? She was not used to exquisite men, especially to those of them who were unmistakably men. Don Modesto was a real novelty.

They drank sherry that was hardly to be seen in the glass, yet had a lovely aroma. They ate olives that Don Modesto said had been gathered that morning. And then they strolled past the Alcázar through a twisted street or two, went upstairs in an old and quiet restaurant, and found their table ready for them in a window which looked south over the great plain. The window was wide open and the night was perfectly cool; stars were crowding up into a navy blue sky.

"This is more my idea than camping in the Guadarramas," said Anna.

"But you weren't thinking of doing that?"

"Well—I might have been there tonight—my husband and some friends are there."

"Ah, your husband! I hope he's very happy where he is," said Don Modesto. "But of course he can't be as happy as I am."

"He enjoys life every bit as much as you do."

"Maybe. But he's not enjoying tonight as much as I am."

There was a dish of green figs in the middle of the table, and

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Anna took one, bit, and ate it. "The green figs of Castile," she said. "There is no fruit on earth to touch them—"

"And now—in September—"

"Oh yes, these few weeks! I adore them! I can eat these all by myself by the kilo! Truly I can. It's disgusting!"

"So can I. But don't eat them now—they'll ruin your palate for dinner—"

"Oh, my palate! I don't take *that* seriously!"

"Well, you should."

The waiter began to serve a cold soup—and Anna remembered that she was hungry.

Dinner was lovely, and became great fun. They drank much wine and their talk was so gay and even silly that Anna forgot much of the elaborate seducer's nonsense of the afternoon and let herself flirt with the handsome young Spaniard. It occurred to her sometimes as thin talk rattled along that probably the impressive descents from Henry III's chamberlain and Moorish princes were imaginary, and that it might be that Mama was not living a mad-hidalgo life behind emblazoned walls. These things did not seem to fit in with his astuteness, and he looked far too like a young El Greco nobleman for it to be true.

"Are any of your relations in the Burial picture in Santo Tome?" she asked him.

"Not one," and there was something conspiratorial in the answer and the sound that pleased her.

Sometimes his hand came across the table and lay on hers, and he fingered her wrist. She looked round at the few tourists at other tables.

"We may be causing amusement," she said once, drawing her hand away. "But I suppose they'll think we're on honeymoon."

"Ah," he shuddered. "Poor people on honeymoons!"

"Anyway, the waiter knows you aren't."

"Yes, good Eduardo. He knows me well."

"Then he must think me rather an ass."

"No, Eduardo doesn't have that idea."

How gently he speaks, Anna thought.

Some boys were trying out a flamenco song below them on the hill. Dinner was over now. Between them they had eaten nearly all the green figs in the dish.

"Let's go and hear what they're singing," said Anna.

They walked east, past the hospital of San Juan, and downhill over the bridge. They went slowly; and, turning, saw the town become all legendary again, dark and wonderful, starlit, lamplit, riding the vast blue night. They leaned against a tall rock in dusty grass at the edge of the dusty road. A solitary grasshopper chattered somewhere about their feet, and far away the boys were still singing; stopping; repeating a wild phrase.

Modesto took Anna into his arms. "I love you," he said.

"But that isn't true."

"It is true now."

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" Perhaps. But I love my husband."

He laughed very softly. " The most natural thing in the world—of course you love your husband—but—"

" No but. I love him as a lover—and he loves me as a lover. We've never got domesticated."

" So you say. But three years—it's impossible."

" Oh, stop arguing! " she said.

. . . In the railway carriage Anna writhed in her seat, and gave a little cry. She had forgotten the sleeping young man in the far corner—but he did not wake.

She got up, wanting to walk about; but decided the corridor was dangerous, until after Medina del Campo. Well, that would not be long—here at last was Valladolid. She sat down again, and lit a cigarette.

The train slowed into the big, lazy station. She stared at the platform, looking, she hoped, the very expression of well-bred calm, but feeling ignoble and shaky—and every year of her age.

But she knew that it was by no means her age that was deflating and sickening her at this moment, it was her youth. Her young self in an episode of bad and loose and mean behaviour of which she had long ago buried all traces, so that over the years she had only been reminded of it secretively in that she was careful never to revisit Toledo. An episode of which no one but herself had ever known—and, of course, this man in another carriage, who had forgotten her and it and who was happily going to leave the train at the next station.

They moved out of Valladolid . . .

" I haven't argued since I saw you," the Spaniard had said, as he bent and kissed her mouth. As Anna tasted that kiss, queried and then accepted it, then held it, received it—delightedly, as in wonder at a gift newmade and unimagined—all idea of comedy fell away, all care for yesterday and for tomorrow, all wordiness and argument. Instead her senses took charge; flared up to meet this strange, illicit claimant. She was enchanted. Within one kiss and the gentle movements about her head and shoulders of two unknown hands, her whole body was seduced.

So it was. A will within her which was hers but not her familiar, accepted the hour and the sin, and made them natural and lovely.

They moved in over the burnt grass, away from dust and headlights.

" There are no flowers," Modesto said.

But stars were everywhere, almost down to the grass.

Welded they moved without stumbling on the slope, moved and paused. His hands caressed her, his mouth moved over her eyes and ears and mouth. She kissed his mouth and eyes.

He took her face in his hands. " You are glad? "

She had no words, but she closed her eyes in assent.

" This is a terrible joy," he said. " We must be careful not to spill it."

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For agreement she kissed his mouth. He looked at her in the brilliant night like a visitant from a beautiful, undiscovered world.

"Tomorrow," he said, "tomorrow you will be all mine. We will go away for the whole day—into utter loneliness. I know where. I'll drive you up into those Gredos over there—tomorrow, all day and all night. Will you come?"

Anna kissed him again—and felt as if asleep, more exquisitely and perfectly asleep than she had ever been.

"I drive cars—I love to. But I haven't got one. I shall borrow a certain lovely car I know. But it will take me until noon to do so. Can we wait until noon?"

Anna still had no words, and cared little for trivialities and plans with which he broke across the hour. Broke across, but did not break. Sensual peace still kept her as it were asleep—tomorrow, yes, tomorrow—ah lovely day, all day, all night—

"You are cold." He held her. "You shivered. Your silk is too thin for the night."

He led her over the burnt grass to the road.

On the bridge as they reentered Toledo, Anna took the Spaniard into her arms and kissed him with wild and wide-awake passion.

"Thank you, thank you," she said.

When they came into the very narrow street of Doña Conchita's house they clung together to say good night.

"Tomorrow, tomorrow, love," she said.

"Tomorrow. Today. In Café Suizo, at noon? I shall have the car then. Sleep, love—sleep," the Spaniard said.

The sereno waited for them by Doña Conchita's door. So they parted in silence, with a flick of hands . . .

It was after two o'clock. She opened the shaky old window wide, and looked up contentedly into the navy blue night and all the stars. Naked she lay down then, singing. Tomorrow, love—today . . .

When she woke the room was dark, but the stars were fewer and pale, she could see. She switched on a light. It was half past five. She crossed to the window. Toledo was dark and fast asleep. Her head was aching. Aching terribly, she discovered, when she moved it. She took two aspirins, chewed them slowly, and drank a long glass of water. Then she got back into bed, shivered, and pulled the light coverings up about her.

She lay and stared at the fading stars.

Tomorrow—today was here.

She felt all through her body the simple pain of desire. At noon, at Suizo's; and then the car and away into loneliness, into the Gredos. Today and tonight.

Yes, but her brain spoke now, as the aspirins worked. Today and tonight, yes. But you are in love now—for what it's worth. Stupidly, mistakenly, contemptibly, perhaps—but you are somehow trapped. You want what this Modesto gives you; he has taken you by surprise; he has broken down your great security. That is all very well at this point—but by tonight you will be his

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mistress, you will be committed and impassioned—you know you will—

Anna turned over and cried out.

She was confounded by her own weakness, and her great pain. Robert, she cried. Oh, Robert! Oh, Clare!

It would be all right. Modesto was gentle. No gentler lover could be imagined than he had shown himself to be. Never had she supposed that a man could be like that—or a man's kiss so exquisite—so unendurably tender. He was gentle, gentle. She would meet him at Suizo's, and explain that there would be no today and tonight—

But behind the Modesto of last night stood the Modesto of the afternoon—and she saw now, as she stared at the pale sky, that the two men were one—and obstinate and unmanageable in combination. They had together a power, these two Modestos, which had brought her in a very few hours to this place of exquisite delight and temptation.

She got out of bed. They must not take her further. She would fight them, in noonday light. Knowing her enemy now—oh, enemy! Who but her weak self was her enemy?—but knowing now what was to be feared in herself she would fight Modesto, face him honestly. She would deny nothing, take back nothing of last night's surrender—oh, she would tell him of her gratitude. But she would master him. She would not drive off into the lovely Gredos—away for ever, it might idiotically be, from Robert and from Clare—she would explain; she would, as she must, forgo. She had no excuse for last night's sensual delight—and she would offer none. She had only gratitude, and that she gave. But—Modesto would be gentle, and let her go.

Daylight was coming angularly now to her window. Hardly a star—and far off a shepherd whistling. She pulled her dressing-gown about her. But I must be honest, she said. I must tell him that I long to go with him to the Gredos. Oh, I do, I do, she wailed.

She stood up, switched on the lights, and decided that there could be no more sleep—she would wash and dress.

As she stood splashing herself bravely with cold water, she became quite reasonable and acknowledged that if she said to Modesto that she longed to go off with him to the Gredos and be his lover—as in grace and decency she would be bound to tell him—she had no chance at all of not going. His skill and technique were such that in acceptance of the simple truth he would just carry her off, and she would go not quietly but in a trance of pleasure.

On the other hand, to act the virtuous, the converted morning-wife, disgusted with her lapse—that might bore him, as it should—but it would the less deter him from his arranged adventure.

She laughed—in despair. What kind of a vagabond-seducer have I fallen for? And the word brought last night about her in a rich cloud. Heaven help me, she thought, where shall I end today?

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She dressed by the window, watching Toledo move lazily, here and there, and the plain below unveil itself and stir.

She was perplexed . . . She was also happy, in a guilty visitation, even nearer and sharper than her perplexity. The simple trouble was that, out of the blue, she felt like a lover; she felt loved and loving, both with a foreign sharpness and an exquisite, certain guilt—and also she knew that the tiny situation was sinful and absurd. All right, all right, she told herself impatiently. I'll explain to Modesto—after all, he won. He won hands down. That's all he wanted. The rest can really now be taken as had. I'll make that clear!

She laughed, and cried—and pushing back her sudden tears, picked up the little leather folding frame beside her bed, that held her favourite snapshots of Robert and Clare. "That will do, won't it? You'll both forgive me—I'll have done you no harm, I swear."

But as she stared into her daughter's very seriously fixed eyes—eyes then only five months practised on the world and already so full of question—it occurred to her that if they were to be satisfied she would have to make very sure indeed of her retreat from a position in which she did not merit their deep trust.

Doubtfully she kissed the little face in the photograph. More doubtfully she kissed the other photograph, of smiling, innocent Robert.

She realised that she did not know what to do.

At half past six she heard Conchita moving about the kitchen. She went out to her and asked for coffee.

They sat and drank it in peace by the open window.

"You're very early," said Conchita. "Are you going anywhere?"

"I'm going to Madrid," Anna surprised herself by saying. "There's an early train, isn't there?"

"Sometime after seven—yes. I thought you'd be here longer—"

"Well, no. What do I owe you, Conchita?"

She paid and kissed her hostess.

"Give my love to Robert. . ."

She felt like a thief, almost tiptoeing to the Plaza Zocodover. It was a long way down to the station, but there would be a bus.

The Zocodover was empty and fast asleep. Save, over beyond the Café Suizo, one taximan who was dusting his cab. Not yesterday's taximan.

"I want to catch a train to Madrid," she said to him.

"It's just gone two minutes ago," he said.

"Ah well then, the next one. Will you take me to the station?"

"With pleasure. But the next train to Madrid leaves at half past twelve."

"Ah!" She must get away before a soul stirred. "There's a bus for Madrid, isn't there?"

"You're out of luck, young lady. The bus always leaves at seven."

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"And the next?"

"At thirteen hours."

She stood and stared about her. She must get out of Toledo now—before it was awake. "How much would you charge to drive me to Madrid?"

He smiled at her in wonder. "It is many kilometres, lady."

"I know. I have to get there. How much?"

"I fear it would be one hundred and fifty pesetas."

That was about three pounds. She could afford them. She must. They represented Robert and Clare.

"All right," she said.

"Now?" He seemed amazed, but she smiled at him reassuringly.

"Yes. It's nothing alarming—it's just that I have to be in Madrid very early."

He took her bag and opened the taxi door for her. "You'll be there early," he said.

And she was. It was only half past eight as they drove over the Toledo Bridge—Modesto still, she guessed, asleep behind his coats of arms. Ah Heaven! What a self-protecting cad she was!

And she took her self-protection to the nth degree of cunning. As she travelled she had reflected that Toledo was a very small town, that this amused taximan would talk of his eccentric break-of-day customer, and that Modesto knew all the taximen and would find out at all costs where she had gone to. His anger against her would make him more than ever—only with contempt now—the implacable conqueror of yesterday afternoon. He had that car he was to borrow—and he would come and find her.

"I want to be dropped at the General Post Office, in the Plaza de la Cibeles," she said to the driver.

He must have been surprised by the instruction; but to have thought of so brilliantly anonymous a destination made her laugh, in her runaway shame. Conchita did not know her Madrid address—hardly knew indeed how to spell or pronounce her awkward Welsh surname. So, as she paid her smiling, puzzled driver, and walked up the steps of the Palacio de Communicaciones, she knew that her combined cowardice and cunning had cut her off absolutely from last night—and from today's music that she would not face.

She felt like a rat as she went up the steps, and waited for the Toledo taxi to vanish round the fountain.

THE train was slowing again. Anna's thoughts were with Robert. Darling, you never knew anyway—never knew what a two-handed cad I was, did you? Oh, if we'd known in that hot, trying summer that it was to be your last—if I'd known when I went to Toledo that you were to die in your very next June—oh, darling Robert!

Tears poured down her face. The young man in the far corner

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was preparing to leave the train—here was Medina del Campo.

The carriage door was pulled back, and Don Modesto bowed over her. "I had wanted to come and talk with you," he said, "but I feared you would not be alone in your compartment—so I ventured to write you this note."

She looked up as she took it from him, and she saw that her tear-wet eyes and face startled him. She gave him her hand, and he bowed over it.

"Adiós, senora," he said gravely. "Hasta luego."

Never had he looked more El Greco, or more beautiful. He left the carriage and descended from the train.

Exquisite lights and faint shadows of evening were spreading over Castile now. Anna dried her eyes, and tidied up her face. Don Modesto's white envelope lay on her lap, and she smiled at it, but in two minds.

Did he recognise me then? she wondered. Or is this just the same old pick-up technique? How amusing if it is! If by mere chance he is playing his customary game, unwittingly, with the aged wreck of a youthful fancy!

Shall I tear up this envelope without opening it? Half of her wanted to, the half that for so many years had been ashamed of cad-behaviour; but the other half, novelist and curiosity-box, wanted to read its contents. And that half won.

There was a letter, and folded into it two cards. She looked at them first.

The one said: *Modesto Maria Morales y Aguirre*, and gave an address in a block of apartments that she knew, in Calle Alfonso XII. The other, professional card, said: *Modesto Maria Morales y Aguirre, Abogado* (lawyer) and gave an address in Calle Velasquez.

She smiled at the pieces of pasteboard. Absolutely correct and bourgeois, and as far from escutcheons of Toledo as were the respectable surnames. So I was right about the ancestors, she thought—and smiled affectionately back to the young man on the hill above the Virgen del Valle.

Then she unfolded the sheet of thick white paper. It carried, heavily engraved in black, the Calle Alfonso XII address. Beautiful handwriting but, characteristically, no opening convention.

I was startled when you sat down, but not at first sure of what memory was saying to me. I intervened about the vegetables—do you remember?—in order to make you look at me directly. Then I was sure. You did not recognise me, I think, until the waiter said my name. I have always known that I would meet you again. Had I not been sure of that I could hardly have lived with the insult you inflicted. It was, your dreadful action, the one certain way to make yourself remembered. Perhaps you know that, and that was what your vanity preferred to the expression of love. Had we gone to the Gredos, we'd have gone, it would have been beautiful and, long ago by me, and you, forgotten. But an insult is a deeper matter than a night of love.

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Over the years, when I recalled your brutal bad manners, your self-protecting cowardice, I planned exquisite revenges, and I knew that I would meet you, and have the chance to execute my necessary satisfaction.

Absurdly, chance has proved my certainty. But absurdly, when I find all cruel angers against you old and dead. I want no youthful savageries any more, and I find I have forgiven you. What gives me pleasure is to see and recognise your beauty still. That surprised me—because I used to rejoice in how ugly and fat and dulled and jaded you would be. But there is no place for such rejoicing. You are unmistakably the girl—in shadow, in fading—that I knew—and I am confounded. You look tired—and I hesitate to thrust your cruel, youthful past upon you. Yet I shall, I promise you, telephone the Florida Hotel tomorrow evening, and I hope very much that the years will have made you more reliable—for I should love to talk over to you now, in our grey time, that golden, solitary day. You see, I have forgiven you. In a day or two we shall talk, and you will hear how much I have had to forgive.

Modesto Maria Morales y Aguirre

Anna read the letter twice. Then she folded it and the cards into the envelope, which she laid on the seat beside her.

What she had read was a vivid invocation of that golden, solitary day. She admired the sternness, the accuracy with which the letter accused her—because brutal bad manners, self-protecting cowardice, had been her own clear accusations against herself, in that far off humiliation. Trust him to see through me, she thought bitterly—and reached out to the envelope.

She would tear it up—and the cards. Modesto Maria Morales y Aguirre. This was a good and comic conclusion to a nothing. She could end it all over again, that nothing. She had not reserved a room at the Florida. Indeed, she need not go to Madrid. She could get out at Avila.

The ironic meeting was a good conclusion. Yes—but there was this letter. Could she insult this letter, as she had once insulted its writer? She opened the envelope, and read it through again. As she folded it, the train slowed into Avila, folded in darkness. She did not descend.

She lighted a cigarette.

In Madrid, at El Norte Station, she took a taxi.

" Hotel Florida," she said.

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CASTLE IN SPAIN

May the sun set for me where I keep my love.

Spanish Proverb

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Golden Time

O the vines were golden, the birds were loud,
The orchard showered, the honey flowed . . .

FREDERIC PROKOSCH, *Fable*

The Leader of His Majesty's Opposition lay sunk in a rather glorious coma, made splendid by dreams of Oriental imagery—of painted paper houses; of golden dragons and gardens of almond blossom; of golden limbs and almond eyes, humble and caressing; of very small golden feet among almond blossoms; of little painted cups full of golden tea; of a golden voice singing behind a painted paper screen; of humble caressing little golden hands and eyes shaped like almonds and the colour of night . . .

Mr. Outrage alone lay happily undisturbed, his mind absorbed in lovely dream sequences of a world of little cooing voices, so caressing, so humble; and of dark eyes, night-coloured, the shape of almonds over painted paper screens; little golden bodies, so flexible, so firm, so surprising in the positions they assumed.

EVELYN WAUGH, *Vile Bodies*

Golden Fleece

O Golden Fleece she is where she lies tonight
Trammelled in her sheets like midsummer on a bed,
Kisses like moths flitter over her bright
Mouth, and as she turns her head
All space moves over to give her beauty room.

Where her hand, like a bird on the branches of her arm
Droops its wings over the bedside as she sleeps,
There the air perpetually stays warm
Since, nested, her hand rested there. And she keeps
Under her green thumb life like a growing poem.

GEORGE BARKER, *O Golden Fleece, Secular Elegy: VI*

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In Apricot Shade

This was the second surprise he had got in a bedroom within a few weeks. She had changed the positions of the lamps and now they had apricot shades, and one lamp on the dressing-table had a green shade and somehow or the other she was glowing like an Indian girl as she sat in front of her table mirror with her back to him. The music, too, belonged to the mood in the room.

Nicholas knew that he would be astounded if his mind was able to work, but nothing operated but his sense of instinct, and his instinct told him to take all this just by the feel of it. For a moment he just listened to the music and kept his eyes on her.

It was no more than a stupid habit of mind which had been astonished by the fact that a woman sat there naked above the waist and took no notice of him being there. In the mirror he saw that she was making up her mouth heavily until it looked a huge moist scarlet sweetmeat on her golden face.

VIVIAN CONNELL, *The Chinese Room*

Girl, Boy, Flower, Bicycle

This girl
Waits at the corner for
This boy
Freewheeling on his bicycle.
She holds
A flower in her hand
A gold flower
In her hands she holds
The sun.
With power between his thighs
The boy
Comes smiling to her
He rides
A bicycle that glitters like
The wind.
This boy this girl
They walk

In step with the wind
Arm in arm
They climb the level street
To where
Laid on the glittering handlebars
The flower
Is round and shining as
The sun.

M. K. JOSEPH

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ULTIMATE WEAPON

By L. P. DAVIES

FIFTEEN minutes I give it.

And Abel isn't worried. I figure he's real happy. And impatient—mooning about the place like a lovesick youth waiting for his first date. Or for his girl to come back to him after she's been away.

That's how it is. This is how it was.

We came together, Uw, Abel, and me, just ten years ago. We called her Uw right from the start. Uw; U.W. Short for Ultimate Weapon. A thousand feet of tapering metal, fifty feet across at the fuel base, a central computer room, and a nose packed with the biggest punch the world has ever seen. Or is ever likely to see.

She took a quarter of a century to build. She well-nigh bankrupted the country in the process. But she was worth it, so the Pentagon boys say, and there she is, all set and roaring to go, the biggest deterrent there ever was.

Maybe one day They—that's what we call them, to be diplomatic—maybe They'll take a chance and start pushing their buttons.

And if and when They do, we'll push ours, or rather Abel will . . .

Almost from the start I had the feeling deep down that that's what would happen one day. I don't know about Abel. Maybe he had the same feeling, but if he did, he didn't show it. He was too busy working up to something else. And by the time he'd worked it out, pushing that damned button was the furthest thing from his mind. That wasn't because he had any leanings towards Them. Abel had no time for leanings towards anything except Uw.

Uw meant everything to him. A metal box filled with machinery. You wouldn't believe it. You think I imagined it?

Listen.

There's just the two who have ever had anything personal to do with Uw, and Abel and me, we're those two. A middle-aged computer expert—no point in disguising the truth—with thinning

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hair, dentures, and the makings of a paunch. And three hundred pounds of metal alloy with two arms, two legs, photo-electric eyes, and a viridium skull crammed with memory tapes and reflex circuits.

You might think that robots don't have feelings. Well, they do. At least, one of them does. The one they spent two million dollars in making and which has one main function in life—"in life," that's a laugh—to press the button when the order comes through.

I'm not mad. Ten years of being alone here with Abel and Uw hasn't done that.

I can work things out for myself like the rest of you. Like at the start. I got to wondering why it had to be a robot. Why not two men, or three? Why one man and a robot?

Then I found the answer. The fewer people in the know, the better. There were those two men in the Pentagon. Two trusted men. How far can you trust any man? Increase the number and you increase the risk. Right, so just have one man on the list. But you can't just send him out and leave him on his own. He's got to sleep and eat and do other things. You know. He's only human. But a thing of metal and plastic, that's different. No sleep, no eat. On duty twenty-four hours each day. And infallible.

So two million dollars equals one very special robot.

We used to play chess occasionally. But Abel hadn't got the right sort of mind for that, and so it got that I used to win every time. So we gave it up and that left us with nothing to do but go through the motions of waiting.

This is what we spent our time doing. We had to keep Uw in trim, and this is how we did it: six tapes, six destinations. Six routes all carefully worked out on tape. Right. In the underground control-room we would feed in a tape. Any one at random. The message would be transmitted upstairs to Uw. Then we would go up in the lifts, through half a mile of solid rock and into her stomach computer, and watch what she did with the tape. And she was always right; never swerved from her course by an inch. But we had to do it twice a day. Feed in a tape, follow the theoretical flight on her screen, make any adjustments that might be necessary, pat her on the back, and then go back through the rock to the control-room to wait for a practice alert.

On an average we used to get one of those a week. A buzzer would sound and a number flash; the number of the tape we had to use. Those times we didn't go upstairs to watch from inside Uw. We sat at the underground control panel just like she

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had really gone. The only difference from an actual firing was that Uw stayed put and the red light didn't come on. That was the light that would flash only if the warning was real.

Abel and I, sometimes we used to chat away to each other just like ordinary folk. He told me once that he was sure nothing would ever happen to take Uw away from him. I got worried when he came out with that one. But there wasn't anything I could do about it. There was nobody I could tell. And then one day he upped and told me that he was sure she was trying to talk to him.

That was about the time we had given up trying to play chess; when we'd been together for maybe a couple of years. I figure he had some idea that I may have noticed something for myself. And there was something, only I couldn't be sure that it wasn't only my imagination.

There was the way her sounds went different when he sat at her main panel. Almost purring, not clucking like an old hen like she used to do with me. When Abel sat by her, nursing her dials and switches, she would hum softly, warmly, almost affectionately, and do everything except reach out to put her arms round him and tell him she loved him. But then, she wasn't like Abel; she couldn't talk. Only make noises.

He said that it was a question of like reaching out to like. Well, maybe it was. That was something I couldn't understand. Hours he used to spend alone with her, when by rights he should have been on duty in the control-room. Me, well, who was I to try to come between them? I bet the guys who spent all those years putting bits of metal together and then making them work never dreamed that anything like that might happen.

And of course it was impossible. A machine like Uw just can't think. No matter how complex her system of relays and circuits, a machine like that can't work things out for itself. Not like a robot. I kept on telling myself that, right up till the end. Right up to this morning.

It was early. We hadn't even started the normal routine when the practice alert sounded. Two seconds flat to reach the control panel. Tape three, it ordered, passing on the decision of those two guys in the Pentagon.

But it wasn't another practice alert after all. This time the red light was on, flashing away fit to bust.

You know something? When Abel saw that light he just seemed to go to pieces. We had fed in the tape, and half a mile above our heads Uw was all set to blast, but Abel wouldn't do what he was supposed to do and press that button.

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So I did it for him. I'd been the odd man out in the eternal triangle long enough. I pushed him aside, thumbed it home; the world shuddered and groaned, and Uw was on her way after ten long years of waiting.

It was as simple as that.

Then I began to get worried. There was no telling what Abel might try to do. So the first thing I did was to station myself in such a way that he couldn't get to the destruction button. I guess that it was instinct made me do that. When I had time to think about it I realised that the last thing he would want to do was harm her, let alone blast her out of existence. That was going to happen anyway when she reached target, but he wouldn't be the one responsible.

I watched her on the screen; a slow-moving globule of light on a painted map. She was picking up speed and she was dead on target. There's no point in mentioning which city she was aimed at. That's neither here nor there.

Abel came to stand at my shoulder. I could feel him shaking. It wasn't a good sort of feel. I wondered if he would finally crack up. But he stuck it out.

We watched Uw leave the land and start to wing over the Atlantic. She didn't waver from her course by so much as a millimetre. But then she wouldn't, not until the defensive missiles came up seeking her. Then she would twist and turn like she was alive.

Now she was going straight as a die.

She was somewhere over mid ocean when things started to go wrong. First her speed started to fall off. Needles on dials that had been steady began to flicker and swing. It was contagious, that uncertain wavering of metal pointers. Other dials took up the same story. She was changing course.

Uw was turning and coming back home.

I hadn't really believed until then that there had been anything between her and Abel. But then I knew that I had been wrong. It had broken his heart to watch her go. And by the look of it, she hadn't been too happy about the parting either.

So she had worked it out for herself and she was coming back to him.

Me—why should I worry? I'm only three hundred pounds of metal and plastic and I have no feeling. Abel's different. He's flesh and blood. But he's not worrying. He's standing there waiting, smiling . . .

Five minutes I give it now.

And God, what a lover's meeting it will be.

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CROSS-OVER

MR. CALDER sat behind the wheel of his old Ford Zodiac and stared out at the sodden world. It was four o'clock on a February afternoon and visibility was down to a hundred yards. It would decrease still further as afternoon fell away into evening.

Ahead of him, a length of white road crawled up towards the skyline, running with water in all its ruts. To left and right stretched unfenced moorland. The rain covered everything in a slowly-moving pall.

A high-pitched whistling noise made him look down.

Headphones hung over the back of the passenger seat, the squab of which had been taken out. In the open space where the seat should have been was a black, ebonite-fronted box. It had two tuning knobs and a single, large dial graduated in degrees, on which a needle was rotating slowly.

The whistling stopped. The needle on the dial steadied, and the voice of Mr. Behrens, distorted but clearly recognisable, spoke from the headset.

" Seventeen, eighteen, nineteen. Back to eighteen. Steady on eighteen. Over to you."

Mr. Calder put his thumb on the " speak " switch of the microphone and said, " Two hundred and thirteen. I shall have to re-plot. Out for a moment."

The map on his knees was mounted on plywood and covered with talc. He took a protractor from the pocket of the car, aligned it carefully on the talc, and marked four points. Then he picked up a graduated ruler and joined the points so that they formed two intersecting lines. He peered down at the map. It was now so dark that he needed a torch, and it took a minute to get it out of the car locker and focus it.

Then he picked up the microphone, and said, " He's on the Nettlefold by-road, going north."

The ghostly voice of Mr. Behrens answered, " I agree. We'd better get moving. We'll take another cross-bearing ten minutes from now. If we keep on as we are, one of us ought to cut him off before he gets to Felshead. Out."

Mr. Calder started up the engine, engaged gear, and splashed

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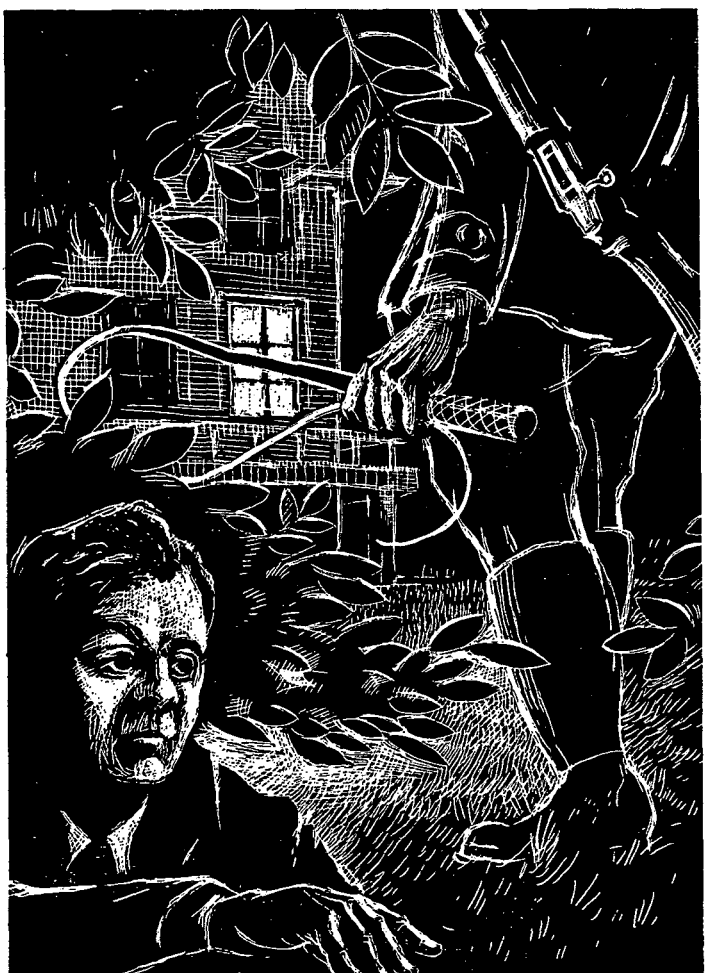
A NEW MR. CALDER STORY

BY MICHAEL GILBERT



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off up the road, his windscreen wipers working busily . . .

It was nearly two hours later, and quite dark, when he turned out of the minor road which he had been following, into a rather larger road. Ahead of him, his lights picked out a signboard. "This looks like it," he said to himself. "And about time too."

The Bailiffs Arms was a dark, crooked building, originally a posting-house, now a small residential hotel. Mr. Calder steered his car into the yard. There were two other cars parked there already. One was a Morris shooting-brake and belonged, he knew, to his friend, Mr. Behrens. The other was an old but solid-looking Mercedes.

Mr. Calder parked his own car, locked all the doors carefully, and made his way through the back door of the hotel into the smoking-room. A bright fire was blazing in the hearth. On one side of it Mr. Behrens was seated. On the other chair he recognised, with some surprise, the angular figure of Mr. Fortescue, who combined the offices of manager of the Westminster branch of the London and Home Counties Bank, and of head of the Joint Forces Standing Intelligence Committee.

Mr. Fortescue, who made few sartorial concessions, was dressed in the same black coat and striped trousers that he would have worn in his banker's parlour.

"I didn't know, sir, that it was you who was playing hare to our hounds," said Mr. Calder.

"It's the first time we've given the apparatus a field trial," said Mr. Fortescue. "I thought I might as well do it myself. Since you both arrived here within five minutes of me, I gather it was effective."

He put his hand into the side pocket of his coat, pulled out what seemed to be an ordinary cigarette lighter, and placed it on the table.

"Extremely effective," said Mr. Behrens. "How does it work?"

"It's a transmitting set, which sends out a single VHF note. It's battery-powered, and will transmit for two hundred hours. It's tuned in to the receiving sets in your cars, which incorporate a direction finder. The whole thing's a development of the device which the Germans used for locating transmitting sets in Occupied France—only it's much more accurate, and it works over a much longer range."

"What sort of fix does it give you?"

"The makers say one mile at a hundred miles. That's under laboratory conditions. But you can't rely on that in practice."

"I'll say you can't," said Mr. Calder. "Every time your car passed under a power line, the beam jumped about like a

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performing flea. And another thing. You were doubling about—changing direction—going back on your tracks. If we were really after someone, and he didn't know we were there, presumably he'd get on to some route nationale, or autobahn, and go down it damned fast. Every time we stopped to plot his position, he'd get ten miles farther away from us."

"There's quite a simple solution to that," said Mr. Fortescue. "You must be given very fast cars. Anything else?"

"Can't they fit a cut-out to eliminate interference from power lines?"

"They're working on it now. It's the one big snag in the apparatus. But it's a difficult technical problem."

"Well, here's an easy one," said Mr. Calder. "I want a map-board with an electric light built into it, so that I don't have to waste time messing about with a torch every time I plot."

"A good idea," said Mr. Fortescue. "What about you, Behrens?"

"I didn't experience any real snags," said Mr. Behrens. "We were helped by the fact that we were operating on a stretch of moor with very few roads. So, however roughly we plotted, there was never any real doubt where you were, and which direction you were going. If there were a lot of little roads, it might be trickier. But I think it's a perfectly sound method of following a car, without having to get within miles of it."

"Yes," said Mr. Fortescue. "I think the experiment can be said to have been successful."

"Was it just an experiment?" said Mr. Calder. "Or had you something practical in mind. Something you intended to use us on."

Mr. Fortescue said, "I've got something very practical in mind. We're going to use this device to uncover *Route M*."

For a long moment nobody spoke, and the only sound was the battering of the rain against the windows. Then Mr. Behrens said, "That's a very interesting idea. Which of us is going to be the hare on *that* run?"

"I'm afraid," said Mr. Fortescue, with a smile, "that you're both too well known to our friends on the other side to make convincing hares. You'll be acting as hounds, just as you did today. The hare's going to be Nichol. Do either of you know him?"

"David Nichol. Early thirties."

"That's right."

"I taught him German—that would have been just after the war. He must have been about fifteen. He was a good linguist, even then."

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"He started learning European languages when he was eight. He speaks half a dozen, and is completely fluent in German and Russian."

"Unusual application for a boy of eight," said Mr. Calder.

"He was an unusual boy," said Mr. Fortescue. "With an unusual background. His father, John Nichol, was an ardent communist. He was one of the first to join the anti-Franco forces in the field. He was very lucky. He survived for nearly a year."

"With that background," said Mr. Calder, "David should be a thoroughgoing communist himself."

"And so he might have been. But some very odd stories got back to his mother, about the circumstances of his father's death. Very odd, indeed. According to his comrades, some of whom ultimately got back to England from internment, or prison camp, John Nichol wasn't an ordinary battle casualty. There was a mystery about his death. One story, which was widely believed, was that he had been betrayed to a Franco patrol by the orders of the Commissar of his battalion. The Russians were becoming alarmed by his growing influence in the group, and came to the conclusion that he ought to be liquidated before he became canonised."

"There's a ring of probability about that," agreed Mr. Calder.

"It was probable enough to convince his mother. She decided to dedicate David—then aged eight, mind you—to the anti-communist front. She was a woman of considerable imagination, and great persistence. She had her son trained in such a way that he was bound to go into Intelligence, which he did. Of course, we realised, as soon as we set eyes on him, that we'd got a man in a million. Single-minded, dedicated, with all the basic skills ready learnt. The difficulty was to know how to use him best."

Mr. Fortescue stopped to tap out his pipe, and said, "In the end, we sold him to the Russians."

"With a return ticket, I presume."

"We hoped so. We sent him to Korea, and arranged for him to be captured. He was an exceptionally intelligent and docile prisoner. They sent him to the Hwei Pé Camp School, where he was thoroughly indoctrinated. When Soviet Intelligence were completely happy about him, they arranged for him to be returned to this country on exchange."

"Nice," said Mr. Behrens.

"He's been invaluable," agreed Mr. Fortescue. "But he can't keep it up for ever. That's why we're going to use him to uncover *Route M*. A final fling."

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" It seems almost a waste," said Mr. Calder. " I don't mean that as a criticism," he added hastily. " You'd be able to judge best. But a well-placed double agent—"

" Discovering how *Route M* works—where it starts—what the stations are en route—is becoming more important than anything else in our programme. In the last ten years they've taken a constant stream of people out by it. Their agents, our agents, scientists, diplomats, all sorts. It's got to be shut down."

" If we shut it down, won't they simply open another route? "

" Oh, certainly. But it'll take time. It's the next six months that are important."

" Who do we think we're going to lose in the next six months? " said Mr. Calder. " Or is that an indiscreet question? "

" Extremely indiscreet," said Mr. Fortescue. " But I think I'd better tell you."

And he did.

When he had finished, Mr. Calder said, " If that's even on the cards, sir, I agree, of course. It's worth three of Nichol to put the ROAD CLOSED signs up. How soon will things start moving? "

" The first steps have been taken. Nichol has let his Russian masters know that he is under suspicion. He has asked for asylum, in the USSR, and they've promised to get him out. If we suspect him, it follows we won't allow him out of England by any normal route. He'd be stopped at the port or the airfield. Therefore he's got to go unofficially. And that means *Route M.* As soon as he gets his marching orders, he'll tip us off, and we'll let you know. After that, I can give you very few instructions. You'll have to deal with each situation as it arises. If you can locate the route without the other side realising what you're doing, so much the better. If you have to get rough, and close it permanently, it can't be helped."

" It seems to me," said Mr. Calder thoughtfully, " that there's one point where things are bound to get a mite complicated. And that's when we come to the actual cross-over. A lot's going to depend on Nichol, then."

" I recall him quite clearly, now," said Mr. Behrens. " A shock of thick, black hair. A white, rather serious face. Very solemn and self-contained. A person who had elevated self-control to a moral principle."

" He has never touched alcohol in his life," said Mr. Fortescue, " and has never had other than a brotherly regard for a woman. Although," he added, " to judge from modern trends in fiction, even that is not an entirely safe simile these days."

" He sounds a bit of a prig," said Mr. Calder.

" Not a prig," said Mr. Behrens. " A puritan."

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On a day in late April, David Nichol walked along the west bank of Hamble River and out on to the jetty. Ahead of him stretched the estuary, flat and placid. He looked very different from the smart young man in conventional clothes, who had caught the train from Waterloo.

His journey had taken him to a room in a small hotel in a back street in Southampton, where he had stripped to the skin, and put on the seaman's rig carefully laid out for him on the bed; corduroy trousers, rubber-soled shoes, and thick grey stockings, into which the trouser ends were tucked; a string vest, a collarless shirt, a thick, blue roll-necked jersey, and a duffle coat.

Most of his own clothes went into the wall cupboard. A few personal belongings went into pockets or were squeezed into the top of an already bulging kit-bag. Twenty minutes after entering the hotel, he had left it by the back door. From beginning to end, he had spoken no word to anyone in the hotel.

His next stop was at a small bicycle shop. Here, also, he was expected. The owner of the shop—a long man with a squint—had a bicycle ready for him, and helped him to lash the kit-bag on to the carrier. He, also, was a man of few words.

Nichol had stopped at a pull-in for carmen at Botley, and had eaten a meal of eggs and chips, with two mugs of teak-coloured tea, and several wedges of bread-and-butter, after which he had pedalled slowly on his way.

Just short of the jetty which he was making for, stood a bungalow with a derelict strip of garden in front, and an overgrown lawn running down to the river behind. After examining the name on the gate, Nichol had wheeled his bicycle boldly into the garden, propped it against the wall, unstrapped the kit-bag, shouldered it, and walked away up the path to the gate. As he did so, he saw, out of the corner of his eye, a curtain in one of the front windows of the bungalow twitch apart, and close again.

At the far end of the jetty, a thickset man with a beard was sitting on one of the iron mooring-bollards smoking a pipe, and watching the herring gulls fighting for galley scraps. He turned his head as Nichol approached.

"Nichol?"

"That's right, sir."

"You made good time. No hitches?"

"Smooth as clockwork."

"We shall be sailing in an hour. Can you handle a dinghy?"

"I've done most of my rowing at Windsor," said Nichol, "but as long as it's calm, I shall make out all right."

"I could easily row you myself," said the man. "But it might look a bit odd if the owner took the sculls and the latest-

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joined member of the crew sat in the stern. I don't think we're being watched. But I don't believe in taking any chances."

"I'll manage," said Nichol.

In fact, he rowed very competently, and they were soon tying up under the stem of the ten-ton Hillyard Bermuda fore-and-aft-rigged sloop which was swinging in the tideway.

"You get below, and lie down," said the owner. "I've declared a crew of two. One's ashore now. The other's below. They're both dressed exactly like you. All we've got to be careful not to do is to let the three of you appear on deck at the same time."

Nichol nodded, and disappeared down the orlop ladder. The owner cast a slow glance up the Middle Reach of Hamble river. No one appeared to be the least interested in him, or his boat. He extracted a cigar from a case in his breast pocket, and lit it.

Almost exactly fourteen hours later, he said, "Slow ahead. Dead slow. Cut the engine."

It was an hour before daylight, and the sloop lay a quarter of a mile south-west of the Nez de Jobourg, rising and falling on a gentle swell. A thick, white blanket of early morning mist lay over the water.

"Couldn't have had better weather if we'd booked it in advance," said the owner. He had been up all night, his eyes were red-rimmed and his voice was hoarse, but he sounded happy.

"Looks all right to me," said Nichol. "What next?"

"Bertrand will row you ashore in the dinghy. I'm not sure, to within a mile, exactly where you are. But it's not important. All you have to do is to scramble up the cliff—there are half a dozen paths—and you'll find yourself on quite a good road. It runs parallel to the top of the cliff, about half a mile inland. It's got kilometre stones marked Auderville on one side and Beaumont-Hague on the other. You want the stone which shows Auderville—4 and Beaumont—6. That's where the car will be waiting. Clear?"

"Quite clear," said Nichol. "As I don't even know your name, I'm afraid I can't write you a bread-and-butter letter—but thanks for a lovely trip."

"Don't mention it," said the bearded man. "Your kit-bag is already in the boat, I see. Good-bye."

An hour later the sun was rising, red and glorious, out of the mist. The cutter had rounded the Nez de Jobourg and was out of sight, and Nichol was walking along the grass verge of the road, counting the little white hundred-metre stones—seven, eight, nine. The next kilometre stone must be in the dip ahead. No sign of a car.

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Nichol perched on the stone, and lowered his kit-bag to the ground. It was a quarter to seven. Soon farm traffic would be passing. He would have to make a plan.

Someone came through a gap in the hedge, and walked slowly towards him. It was a girl.

His first impressions were of size and colour. She was big, and she was blonde. As she came closer, he took in other details. She had a peasant's nose, with no bridge to it, eyes which were pulled fractionally upwards at the outer corners, and a generous mouth. She was wearing trousers which looked like jodhpurs, but were more generously cut, a polo-necked sweater, and a wind-cheater. She had a business-like look about her, Nichol thought. The sort of girl who could ride a horse, drive a car, or plough a field.

She said, " Mr. Nichol? Put out your right hand. Press the tip of your index finger on to this black stuff. It'll wash off, I assure you. Now on to this pad. Fine."

She had taken out a small card, which she compared carefully with the fingerprint which Nichol had made on her pad. Then she said, " The car is in a field, two hundred metres down the road. Give me your bag."

" It's a bit heavy," said Nichol. " I'd better take it—"

Before he could say any more she had swung the kit-bag on to her shoulder and was walking off down the road.

The car, a dark green Citröen convertible tourer, had been skilfully tucked away in a dip among bushes.

" It is time that you ceased to be a sailor," said the girl. She spoke in the clear, unaccented English of a foreigner who has been very carefully coached in a language, but mostly out of books. " Your travelling clothes are in the kit-bag. You had better take off everything you are wearing. Even the under-clothes are English."

" All right," said Nichol. The new clothes fitted him well. Grey worsted sports trousers, a heavy silk shirt with open neck, and a silk scarf; a grey sports jacket, tighter at the waist than an English tailor would have cut it, and with padded shoulders.

As he took his old clothes off, the girl rolled them up and stowed them in the empty kit-bag. Since the girl herself seemed to regard the operation as a matter of routine, Nichol tried to convey the impression that, so far as he was concerned, there was nothing out of the ordinary in stripping to the skin in front of a girl.

When he was dressed, she said, almost as though the operation they had just concluded had effected an introduction between them, " My name, by the way, is Shura."

" I had better know your second name, too."

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She looked surprised. "The same as yours, of course," she said. "Shura Nichol. We are man and wife. That is how our papers are made out."

Nichol said, "Oh, I see. Yes. I suppose that's a sensible sort of arrangement."

"We are on a camping holiday. The kit is all in the back of the car. There are many camp sites in France and Germany. If we went to hotels, there would be registration forms to fill in—"

"An excellent idea," said Nichol. "Do I drive the car, or do you?"

"We take it in turns. It will be a long day's run. More than three hundred miles. We had better get started."

She threw the kit-bag into the bushes.

"Isn't that a bit risky?"

"In England, perhaps. In France, no. The peasant who finds it will not report it. He will think it good luck."

The tip of Nichol's fingers touched the cigarette lighter, which he had transferred to his new clothes along with his personal possessions. Luck, he said to himself, that's what I'm going to need, too. Any goddamned amount of it.

Eighty miles away, in a wood south of Bolbec, the sensitive needle on the dial of Mr. Calder's car began to quiver. He picked up the microphone.

"*He's off, I think,*" *he said.*

"*Moving south-east,*" *agreed the voice of Mr. Behrens.*

The thing which David Nichol admired most in that long day's run was his companion's driving. He himself was a good driver. A part of his training had been the proper handling of cars, and a course at the Police Driving School had added technique to a natural aptitude. But he was not as good as Shura. She drove as safely as he did, and nearly five miles an hour faster.

There were other things to admire about her. Every move she made had the unconscious economy and control which is only achieved by an athlete at the height of training. Muscle was there, under the flesh, but it was in the right place and was not obtrusive. A ballet-dancer at the peak of her career, an Olympic runner or jumper would have carried her subjugated body and limbs in just such a fashion.

As she drove down the long straight road from Bayeux to Caen, he looked at her out of the corner of his eye, and found himself wondering about her past. She was clearly a Slav; a South Russian, he thought. Perhaps a Georgian. She could not have attained her perfection in English—which was matched,

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as he soon noted, by a nearly equal perfection in French—without at least twelve years' training. Yet she did not look more than twenty-four.

Could a totalitarian régime select boys and girls at twelve, as a breeder might select promising foals, and train them solely for its purposes? Teach them the requisite languages, train them in judo, and the use of poisons, teach them how to shoot, how to drive a car, how to operate a wireless set? There was nothing impossible about it. Sparta had selected her soldiers at the age of seven.

It would dehumanise them, of course. The only thing that Shura had not learnt to do was to smile. Or could she do that too? Or make love? If the job demanded it, she could probably do that just as efficiently as she drove a car.

They had a picnic lunch in a wood, south of Montargis. There was hot soup in a vacuum flask, and pâté, and fruit. Shura served him first, and then herself. She produced a bottle of wine and when he shook his head, put it away, unopened, and substituted citronade.

"I fancy they've stopped for lunch," said Mr. Behrens. "We'll have time to work out an accurate fix on them now."

"We might have time for lunch ourselves," said Mr. Calder, sourly.

All that afternoon they drove on, east and south. Sometimes they talked. Nichol knew very well that if he asked her questions about herself, they would be politely blocked; and she seemed as disinterested in him as an air hostess in a passenger. He was someone to be fed, and watered, and humoured, and strapped into his seat at take-off and landing.

There were maps in the glove-box, but she seemed to know the *Route* and never asked for directions. He tried to estimate where they would be likely to spend the night. If they kept up their present speed and general direction they would be somewhere south of Dijon. She had talked about camping. He knew that France was well ahead of other countries in this respect and had numerous camps, some of them run by national motoring and cycling organisations, others by the local syndicat d'initiative.

They were well-organised places with numbered tent sites, running water on tap, and good sanitary arrangements. During the summer months a camp superintendent would live permanently on the site, in his own caravan.

They had crossed the Saône a few kilometres south of Beaune and were now running up the heavily wooded valley of one of its tributaries. Nichol, who was driving, glimpsed the giant pylons

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of the recently completed Saône-et-Loire hydro-electric project, striding up the hillside on the right of the road. It was half past seven. There was perhaps an hour of daylight left.

"Not far now," said Shura. "The camp lies up this side road. It is a beautiful site."

"You have been there before."

"Once or twice. We turn left here. The road leads only to the camp site. We shall see it in a moment."

The road climbed gently round the contours of the hill. They swung round the final bend, under a wooden arch which said Camp de Louvatange, and came to rest in the gravelled space which formed the carpark.

Despite the earliness of the season, three or four caravans were parked round the opening, and the flysheets of more than one tent could be seen among the trees beyond.

The door of the nearest caravan opened, and a man came out. He had a gingery moustache, thin, gingery hair, and a face the colour of smoked salmon. He said, in very bad French, "Welcome to the camp. My name's Horton. Major Horton. I'm in charge here. If there's anything I can do for you, you must let me know."

His bulbous eyes frankly appraised the girl's face and figure, and he said, with increased warmth, "Anything at all. As soon as you've settled down, come and have a drink and a chat in my caravan, and I'll put you wise to the camp routine."

Ex-public school, ex-Army, thought Nichol. Ex-Kenya, pro-segregation and anti- any sort of hard work as long as someone would pay him gin money.

"It would give us great pleasure to do that," he said in formal French.

"Hullo," said the major. "Here comes another of 'em. Wonder who *he* is. Wasn't told about this one. Unusual rush of business for the time of year."

"These damned power lines are playing old Harry with my set," said Mr. Calder. "Over."

"Not much better here," said Mr. Behrens. "I think he's crossed the river. We shall have to keep pretty close behind him if we don't want to lose him."

"Why not let him settle down for the night. Then we can fix him accurately."

"Suppose he doesn't stop?"

"Drive all night, you mean?"

"Why not? There must be at least two of them."

"If they drive all night," said Mr. Calder, "we shall have to

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I'll take the Besançon road, you cross the river lower down, and keep on his tail. I'll be able to give you some sort of cross-bearing when I get to the top."

Mr. Behrens said nothing. He was beginning to feel the strain. He could, if necessary, go on all night. But what he wanted, at that moment, more than anything else in the world, was a hot bath and a good dinner.

He swung the car round the bend, saw, too late, the notice ahead of him, braked, and came to a halt in a gravelled forecourt.

Three people were walking towards him. One was a girl, the second a man in a bush jacket, with a reddish moustache. The third was David Nichol . . .

He had time to drop the ear-phones on to the floor and slide the seat squab back on to the set, before the man was up with him. He glanced at Mr. Behrens' GB plate.

"My name's Horton," he said. "Major Horton. You wouldn't be a Modern Romany, I suppose?"

"That's right," said Mr. Behrens.

Nichol and the girl were moving off towards their own car.

"Your organising secretary was here last week. He told me I should be seeing some of you chaps soon. I must say, I take my hat off to you. Straight out from your desks and offices. You won't have had much experience of this sort of thing, I take it?"

Nichol and the girl had got into the car, and were bumping off up one of the paths into the wood.

"I'm an accountant," said Mr. Behrens boldly. "I spend my life among balance sheets, and profit and loss accounts. It was only last week that I decided I *must* revert to a simpler method of existence. I haven't got much kit with me. A ground sheet, a couple of blankets."

"You're a real Romany," said the Major admiringly. "I can see that. Prepared to rough it." Mr. Behrens shuddered. "I'm an old campaigner myself. I can probably give you a few tips. Let's find a nice sheltered place for you."

The Major pointed at the tail light of the green Citröen.

"Better give them a bit of elbow room," he said with a chuckle. "They look to me like a honeymoon couple. Don't want to intrude on their privacy, eh?"

"Certainly not," agreed Mr. Behrens.

"Now you'll find quite a snug little berth here, under the roots of this tree. Spread the ground sheet over you, and peg it down each side. What about grub?"

"I've got some cold food with me, and a flask of coffee. I wasn't thinking of doing any actual cooking. Not yet."

"We could have a twig fire going in no time," said the Major.

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" And I've got a few old safari pots and pans I could lend you."

" Thank you, no," said Mr. Behrens. " I've had a long and tiring day. I'll just rig up my—er—bivvy." The bitter thought was of Mr. Calder, at that very moment drawing up before some snug hostelry. " I'll be quite happy with a packet of sandwiches and a hot drink."

" The great thing," said the Major, " when you're sleeping on mother earth is to dig a hole for your hip."

A hundred yards away, Shura had finished erecting the safari-model combined dwelling and sleeping tent and had plugged in the electric light from a spare battery in the car. It looked, Nichol thought, extremely inviting, a tiny refuge of light and shelter in a darkening world.

" Can I help? " he asked.

" It is really easier for me to do it. I know where everything is. Perhaps you could unroll the beds, whilst I set the table."

There were, Nichol saw, two sleeping-bags, each with an inflatable mattress and pillow.

" All you have to do," said the girl, " is to blow them up. You will have to find what degree of inflation suits you best. I like mine quite soft. Just enough to keep my body off the ground. Will you have an aperitif before we eat? "

" Thank you," said Nichol. " I think I should enjoy that."

" Tournedos Rossini will do very nicely," said Mr. Calder. " Followed, I think, by a Sorbet, and a bottle of Clos des Lambrays, 1955."

Outside, it had started to rain.

David Nichol heard the rain pattering on the flysheet of the tent, and turned over in his sleeping-bag. He was tired, but sleep seemed far away. There was something wrong with his mattress. He had inflated it too hard, and was rolling and bouncing like a small boat on a choppy sea. Also he was too hot.

He threw back the down-lined coverlet, and lay for a moment with his arms outside. A warm hand came out from the sleeping-bag beside him. It touched his hand, then moved down to the mattress. There was a hiss of escaping air. Nichol felt himself sinking.

" Better? " asked Shura.

" Much better," he said.

Mr. Behrens was first up. He shaved under a cold tap, repacked his belongings, and ten minutes later was free-wheeling out of the carpark and down the hill. He felt it wiser not to disturb Major Horton. If there was indeed a fee to pay for the

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most excruciating night he had ever spent, it could be collected, in due course, from the Modern Romanies.

In fact, he had not been unobserved. A pair of cold and protruberant eyes under projecting ginger eyebrows had watched his unobtrusive departure.

There was a telephone in Major Horton's caravan, connected to the exchange at Besançon. He asked for a number, and when connected spoke rapidly. His French seemed to have improved.

Mr. Behrens stopped at the first café which he found open, and had breakfast and a more satisfactory wash and shave. He then drove his car into a side turning and switched on his set.

It was still only seven o'clock.

Mr. Calder answered at once.

"I hope you had a good night," said Mr. Behrens.

"Excellent," said Mr. Calder. "And you—?"

"Unspeakable."

"When you went off the air so suddenly, I assumed you'd run into our friend."

"You assumed correctly. My right hip is still paralysed. I'll tell you all about it one day. I think he's off again."

It was a false alarm. It was after eight before the needle flickered, and started to creep across the dial.

"Due east," said Mr. Behrens.

"There are only two roads to Belfort," said Mr. Calder, who had been devoting his attention to the map. "The southern looks the natural one for them. I'll take it myself, and keep ahead. You can take the northern route through Vesoul. And keep out of trouble."

"I'll do my best," snapped Mr. Behrens. "Out."

It was at eleven o'clock, on the long climb up to Altkirch, that he ran into the road block. It was a single whitewashed pole, on trestles across the road. In the split second when he spotted it as he came round the corner, he wondered if his car was heavy enough to crash it. The German frontier was about twenty miles ahead. He braked, and came to a halt.

One of the policemen advanced towards the car. The other remained seated on his chair beside the road. They were oldish men, police reservists, Mr. Behrens thought. He was uncomfortably aware that he had had no time to cover up the apparatus on the seat beside him.

"What's all this about?" he said.

"Routine check," said the man. But he had seen the wireless set. His eyes jerked down to the number plate on the car, and Mr. Behrens saw him glance back at his companion, who got quickly off his chair.

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Mr. Behrens opened the door of the car, and slid out. They were on an upland plateau, with a long view of the road in both directions. There was no other car in sight.

On his left, twenty yards down the track, was a small hay barn. He could see the policemen's bicycles propped up against it.

"This apparatus—you have a licence for it?"

Mr. Behrens sighed deeply.

"Of course," he said. He dipped his hand inside his coat and pulled out an automatic pistol. "If you do not do what I say, I shall be forced to shoot you both. I have already killed three men. I should not advise you to touch your own guns."

The two men backed away. There was no fight in them.

"Into that barn," he said.

The windows of the barn were mere slits, and the bar across the double doors looked stout. They would break out, but it would take them time.

He wheeled the two bicycles back to the road, and threw them down the ravine on the other side. Then he drove off.

Forty minutes later he was in Germany. There was no trouble at the frontier, where he joined a stream of cars passing the check-post. His English passport and GB plate took him through without a hitch.

As soon as he had got clear of the traffic, he switched on his set again.

The ear-phones crackled angrily.

"Where the devil have you been?" said Mr. Calder.

"A bit of a hold-up," said Mr. Behrens. "The police."

"You've been held up by the police?"

"On the contrary," said Mr. Behrens, pleased by his own wit.

"What are you talking about?"

"I'll tell you later. Where's our friend?"

"Ahead of us," said Mr. Calder. "East by north-east. I hope he stops for lunch soon."

The afternoon run was uneventful. Shura drove and Nichol kept his eyes on the map. They were turning slowly north, and he saw, now, that their long detour had been designed to avoid the barrier of Cologne, the Ruhr, and the Lower Rhine where the NATO and West German defences were thickest.

By tea-time they were running into the southern part of the Black Forest, a region of dumpy hills, thick woodland, and occasional lakes. They passed through empty holiday resorts. By August they would be packed with stout fathers in Lederhosen, white-faced Haus-fraus, and a Pied Piper's horde of flaxen-haired children.

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At six o'clock they stopped at one of those lakeside villages and found a café open. They were the only customers.

"Where do you plan to spend the night?" asked Nichol.

"It is a Gast-haus in the forest, near Adelsheim. We shall have no company. It is not yet open for the season."

Now that they had left France behind, she seemed more relaxed, a little more sure of herself; a little readier to talk.

"You know the proprietor then? He allows you to stay there out of season?"

"Certainly. His name is Bauer. He was a member of Goering's personal bodyguard. The Reichsmarschall was an interesting man. Did you know that he was fond of birds?"

"Yes," said Nichol, cautiously. "So I had heard."

"Each of his country retreats was named after a different bird."

"A romantic idea."

"He was highly romantic," agreed Shura. "This one was the retreat of the Nightingale. Die Nachtigall."

It took them two hours, by tortuous roads which zigzagged up hills, twisted into hidden valleys, crossed streams brown with the local iron-ore, and climbed again through pine forest cut into geometrical patterns. It was too dark to read the map, and some of the roads they used would not, he felt certain, have been marked on any map at all. The last fifteen minutes was spent bumping along a sandy track.

"It is a private road," said Shura.

"It feels like one," agreed Nichol.

The Gast-haus der Nachtigall was a three-storey, shingle-roofed building, with a deep balcony along the second-floor frontage, and a wide door leading under the balcony into an interior courtyard. There were no lights in the windows, but Shura drove confidently into the courtyard, and sounded her horn.

A door serving the kitchen quarters opened, and a man came out.

"Good evening, Herr Bauer," said Shura, in German.

"Good evening, Fraulein. You have made good time."

Horn-rimmed glasses, set on a long, thin nose. The hair grey, running back from the brown, seamed expanse of the forehead. The mouth prim.

He said, "My boy will take your things up to your room. A fire has been lit in the Gast-zimmer. Come."

He led the way into the front room. It was panelled in pitch-pine, and from the walls the creatures of the Schwartzwald looked down at them: squirrels, badgers, roebuck, blue hare, and ruffed capercailzie.

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Herr Bauer had brought them, unasked, a tall bottle of white wine and a squat bottle of brandy. He filled two large glasses with wine and two small ones with brandy.

"After a journey," he said, "it is kinder to the stomach to take a small amount of fortified spirits before you drink a natural wine."

Nichol swallowed the brandy. It was aromatic. The glass of wine followed it more slowly. Herr Bauer refilled the wine glasses, said, "Dinner in half an hour," and withdrew.

Nichol said, "He doesn't look much like an S.S. man, does he?"

Shura said shortly, "I imagine that even in S.S. units there must have been administrative people—clerks, and quartermasters." She seemed to be regretting her earlier confidence.

Nichol nodded. The warmth from the tiled stove was grateful. Being locked away, alone with Shura, in this house in the middle of a forest, gave him a delusive feeling of security. Tomorrow there would be trouble. Tonight was tonight.

"The luggage will be in our room by now," she said. "I will go and change. Give me a quarter of an hour."

Nichol sipped the second glass of wine. Somewhere at the back of his consciousness a very faint alarm had sounded. He took a moment to track it down. Two days before, when they had first met, the girl had shown no embarrassment when he had stripped to the skin in front of her. Why should she mind taking off all *her* clothes in front of him. And above all, why had she said something so entirely out of character, so missish, as "I'll go and change. Give me a quarter of an hour." It made no sense.

Nichol put down his wine glass, got up, and went across to the door. The place was quiet as a tomb.

He went out. There was a staircase ahead of him, leading to a landing running the length of the buildings. He guessed that the main bedrooms would face south.

There was a light under the door of one of them, and after a moment's hesitation he turned the handle and went in.

It was their room. Shura's suitcase was on one side of the double bed, open, and her windcheater, sweater, and trousers were lying beside it. Evidently she had changed, but she had done so very quickly.

There was a newish suitcase on the other side of the bed. Nichol opened it and found shirts and underclothes, a pair of flannel trousers, a dark blue pullover, and a jacket, all new, and neatly packed. He took off his shirt and tie, ran some hot water into the basin, and started to clean himself up.

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Herr Bauer said, " A car has just come into the south-west driveway. It has pulled off the road."

He and Shura were in a basement room. They were watching a map of the estate, on the wall, covered by glass. In the bottom left-hand corner, two pinpoints of light glared red. " It could be a casual trespasser, a pair of lovers in a car. But if you are being followed—"

" I think we are being followed," said Shura. " There was a man in a dark blue Saab who came into camp after us last night. He left before we got up, and I have not seen him at all today."

" Martin is patrolling now. If there is a dark blue Saab, we should take no risks. The driver will have to be attended to."

As he spoke, the lights on the panel flickered and changed pattern.

" Possibly I was wrong," said Herr Bauer. " The car is going. Nevertheless, I think we will take all precautions tonight. If there should be trouble—I hope your passenger is a sound sleeper? "

" I will make certain," said Shura seriously, " that he sleeps very well indeed."

It was, in fact, Mr. Behrens who had driven his car into the edge of the Nachtigall domain. He had backed out again in answer to a call on the wireless from Mr. Calder, who had come to a halt half a mile farther down the road. It was the first time they had set eyes on each other since leaving England.

Mr. Behrens pulled up, walked across, and climbed into the back of Mr. Calder's car. In the darkness beside him, something stirred.

He put out his hand and a cold nose was pushed into it.

" I didn't know you were bringing Rasselas with you," he said.

" He refused to be left behind." When Mr. Calder spoke, the great dog turned his head, and his amber eyes reflected the light from the dashboard.

" How are you going to get him back again? "

" We'll think about that when the time comes," said Mr. Calder. " I want to hear about your adventures last night. Tell me more about that chap at the camp."

" He called himself Major Horton. Leathery skin, baldish, with a halo of reddish hair, thick gingery eyebrows, poached egg eyes."

" Sounds an unpleasant character. Do you think he rumbled you? "

" I wondered," said Mr. Behrens. " He did seem to accept me rather easily. If I really had been a Modern Romany, or whatever it was he called me, presumably I'd have had some sort of card or papers. And if he did suspect me, that would account

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for the trouble I had near Altkirch." He told Mr. Calder about it.

Mr. Calder said, "We shall have to sort that out with the Department when we get back. The important point at the moment is, *were you followed?*"

"I'm quite certain I wasn't."

"Did it occur to you that they might have put a midget transmitter in your car, during the night?"

"Certainly it occurred to me," said Mr. Behrens coldly. "I spent half an hour, after breakfast, turning my car out. Nothing had been tampered with."

"In that case," said Mr. Calder, "I wonder why we have already aroused such interest."

"Interest?"

"Before you arrived, a man walked up to the edge of the trees over there, and kept me under observation for several minutes. He has gone now."

"You saw him?"

"No. But Rasselas told me about him. Never mind. The first thing is to find somewhere to eat. I passed a nice little place in the outskirts of Ringheim."

They were finishing dinner when Mr. Calder suddenly said, "Got it."

"Got what?"

"Nachtigall—the nightingale. It was one of Goering's hide-outs. He had five or six of them, all in remote areas, all top secret. When life at the centre got too much for him he used to lie up in one of them. He called them his "nests." They were all named after birds, you see. The lark's nest, the heron's nest, the nightingale's nest."

"I wonder if he had one called the cuckoo's nest."

"I remember being shown round one of them by an American Intelligence Officer in 1945. It had a very elaborate approach warning system, operated by crossing beams of infra-red light. And one or two rather nasty booby traps for the benefit of unwanted visitors."

"A highly suitable staging point for our friends."

"Just what I thought," said Mr. Calder. "A bit later on I'll go and take a look at it. You'd better stop here, and catch up on the sleep you didn't have last night."

"Are you sure you'll be all right by yourself?"

"I shan't be by myself," said Mr. Calder.

A tail thumped against the floorboards.

It was past midnight when Mr. Calder switched off the engine of his car, let it coast quietly down the last hundred yards of road,

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and came to a halt under a clump of trees. It was a clear night, with a full moon marbling the sky. He had been driving without lights.

Now he climbed out of the car and stood for a moment. Rasselas sat beside him, head cocked, the tip of his right ear an inch from Mr. Calder's left shoulder. His nose gave a thrust, as if to say, "Go on—what are we waiting for?" Mr. Calder crossed the road, and climbed through the boundary wire.

It was tidy woodland with most of the undergrowth cleared, and man and dog advanced steadily, on a long slant towards the house.

They were halfway across one of the open glades when Rasselas stopped. He had heard something, away to the right. There was a thick patch of bushes on the far side of the glade, with a slight depression in the middle, which made an admirable hiding-place.

From watching Rasselas, Mr. Calder could chart, with great exactness, the progress of his enemies. He saw the ears prick, the amber eyes swivel slowly, as they followed something invisible to him. Then the lip lifted in a silent snarl as two men stepped out into the glade.

They were dressed in forester's uniform with leather leggings, and both carried, slung across their backs, a short, double-barrelled rifle. Mr. Calder recognised it as the weapon issued during the war to guards in charge of working parties. It threw a spread of heavy buck-shot, and was a weapon for stopping, and crippling, rather than for killing. One of the men carried a stick, which seemed to have some sort of spike on the end of it. The other had a heavy leather whip.

Mr. Calder slid his right hand gently inside his coat, until his fingers rested on the warm butt of his automatic.

The men walked slowly across the glade, heads turning to right and left, passed within six paces of where Mr. Calder was lying, seemed to hesitate for an instant, and then were gone.

It was fully ten minutes before Rasselas stirred. Then he edged his way, silently, out of the thicket. Mr. Calder followed, even more slowly. He was a professional himself and he recognised professional opposition when he saw it.

He moved slowly forward, Rasselas drifting beside him like a grey shadow. Now there was only a single line of trees between him and the house, since he was approaching it from the south-west corner, and had a clear view of the long, southern frontage. He noticed that a light still showed in one of the bedroom windows.

The space between the treeline and the house was dotted with

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bushes and shrubs, and Mr. Calder reckoned that if he went on his stomach, commando-fashion, it would be an easy matter to keep out of sight until he reached the house. If he could find a window open, he had a mind to explore further. As he started to move forward, Rasselas gave out a very soft, rumbling growl. Mr. Calder paused. When nothing happened, he moved again. Rasselas caught his ankle in his teeth.

At that moment the ground under Mr. Calder's hands gave way. At one moment he had his palms on solid earth. The next, his fingers were slithering over the lip of a cavity which had opened in front of him. If he had been moving forward, nothing could have stopped him falling into it.

It was a deep trench, with sheer walls cut into the chalk soil. It had been masked by a thin net of hessian, on which sand and leaves had been sprinkled.

Mr. Calder extracted the pencil torch from his pocket, and directed its pin-head of light downwards. Set into baulks of timber at the bottom of the trench was a treble row of steel spikes, needle-thin, needle-sharp, and fully twelve inches long.

He thought about an intruder, animal or human, falling on to them. The weight of his fall would drive the spikes through an arm or a leg.

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He drew back slowly from the lip of the trench. It extended, so far as he could see, right along the front edge of the tree belt. As he was looking, the single light in the Gast-haus went out.

"There might have been some way round," he said to Mr. Calder next morning. "But, quite frankly, I didn't try. I could *feel* those spikes, all the way home."

"They were expecting you?"

"I think they must have been," said Mr. Calder. "It would take some time to uncover that trench. They daren't leave it open. I could feel a sort of ledge cut inside the lip, so I imagine it's boarded over by day and covered with loose sand. It's the sort of job that'd take a couple of hours to do properly. And whatever the size of the staff, I don't see that they could afford to keep two men patrolling all night, and every night."

Mr. Behrens considered the matter.

"The girl might have been suspicious," he said, "when I practically bumped into her at the camp site. But surely—after a full day's drive—with no glimpse of a pursuer—"

"What about the trouble you had near Altkirch? It must have been a pretty definite tip-off, to get the French police moving so quickly."

"I had the impression it was my car they were looking for," agreed Mr. Behrens. "The first thing the man spotted was the wireless. But it was only when he saw that he started to get excited. But if they were tipped off, who do you suggest did it? That man at the camp? Or the girl?"

"Or Nichol," said Mr. Calder.

Mr. Behrens did not sound surprised, or horrified, at the suggestion. He said, "It's a possibility that has to be borne in mind, of course. I hope it's not true. It suggests one precaution to me, however. The only car they know about is mine. The sensible thing now will be for me to keep close behind him. You keep right out on the wing."

Mr. Calder thought about this for a bit, and then grunted. "Yes," he said. "That seems right."

It was half past six, that morning, when Shura slipped quietly out of bed. She put a raincoat over her pyjamas, and tiptoed from the room.

Herr Bauer was in the control room, talking to two men. He looked up as she came in. He said, "We had a visitor last night."

"What have you done with him?"

"We have done nothing with him. He came, looked at us, and went away." Herr Bauer glanced sourly at the two men, who shuffled, and looked at their feet.

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" There are traces, too, of a car having driven in. It might all be nothing. It might be something."

Shura said, " If the car was a dark blue Saab, then we have been followed across Europe. And I have not the least idea how."

Herr Bauer said, " There are not more than four ways out of the Odenwald. I can have them watched. When you stop for your midday meal, telephone back to me here. I shall be able to tell you then . . ."

Nichol woke up at eight o'clock. He stretched out an arm, found the bed empty, and sat up.

Shura was outside, on the balcony.

" I overslept," he said. " Are we late? "

" No hurry this morning. We need not start before eleven. Breakfast is being brought up to us here."

They took the morning's run at a much slower pace. Nichol had the impression that the clock had become more important than the map. They skirted Wurzburg and Bamberg to the south and stopped for their lunch in a tiny village called Plankenfels, ten miles short of Bayreuth.

Shura slipped away whilst the food was being cooked. When she came back Nichol thought he detected a change in her manner. It was very slight, and if he had not got to know her so well in the three days he had been with her, he might not have noticed it. Something seemed to have put her on her mettle.

During the afternoon Shura did the driving, whilst Nichol kept his eye on the map. They avoided Bayreuth, making a detour to the south, and climbed into the Fichtelgebirge. Gradually the country became more desolate, the farms fewer, the houses farther apart. Ahead of them, on the map, right across their track, and slowly drawing nearer, sprawled the irregular green line which marked the farthest advance of the Russian Army in 1945 and now formed the boundary between the eastern and western worlds.

At this particular point the line joined the national boundary of Czechoslovakia, and ran almost due west, forming a right angle with it. It was into the neck of this sack that they were driving. They had been avoiding main roads for some time, and Nichol was hard put to it to map their twisting progress, but in the fading light he glimpsed a board with the name Quellenreuth, and knew they were not more than ten kilometres from the frontier.

In the next village they turned left. A moment later, right again. They were now heading straight up into the angle itself, an area where his map was blank. He soon saw the reason. It was thick woodland. As they dived in amongst the trees, they switched on their headlights.

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They were running north, and climbing. After about three miles, Shura seemed to hesitate for the first time. She slowed to a crawl, her eyes on the roadside. She saw what she was looking for, swung the wheel, and put the car down a sandy track.

The track seemed to go on interminably, diving into the very heart of the forest, a tunnel of darkness among the trees. Then they were in a clearing. Nichol caught a glimpse of a log hut as Shura swung the car round, brought the car to a halt, and switched off all the lights.

Nichol stirred, but the girl put a hand on his arm. They sat in the darkness and waited. Then the car door was opened from outside, and a man gestured them out. They stumbled across the clearing to the hut; the door was opened, and they went into darkness.

A torch came on. By its reflected light Nichol saw the face of its holder. He had never met him, but he recognised him at once, from many photographs carefully studied. Colonel Tyschenko had been military attaché in Ottawa and Washington and in neither case had his hosts been under any illusions as to his real interests.

"I am sorry," he said, speaking in Russian, "to receive you in this melodramatic way. But we are waiting for the man who has been following you."

"The man in the Saab?" said the girl.

"Yes. He should be here any moment now. We will keep silent, if you please."

It seemed to Nichol like an hour, but was in fact only twelve minutes by the illuminated hand on his watch before there were footsteps outside. The door opened, and three men came in. As soon as the door was shut, Colonel Tyschenko snapped on the light, and the six occupants of the hut blinked at each other.

Two of the newcomers were Russian security men, soldiers in plain clothes. They both carried machine pistols. The third was Mr. Behrens, his hands in his pockets, and a look of distaste on his leathery face.

"He parked his car a quarter of a mile down the track," said one of the men, "and was walking towards the hut, when we stopped him. He had a gun. We have taken it."

Colonel Tyschenko had been staring in some surprise at the scholarly figure in the raincoat. Then his face broke into a smile. "Why," he said, "it is Mr. Behrens. This *is* an unexpected pleasure. Where is your friend—the fat little man—Calder?"

"He'll be here in a moment," said Mr. Behrens. "And he's got six men with him."

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The Colonel chuckled. "No doubt," he said. "No doubt. The six invisible men. It would be a good title for a film. I should be interested to know how you followed our car."

"It's Nichol's suit," said Mr. Behrens. "It has been impregnated with a particularly potent smell. When in doubt as to which way he had gone, I had only to get out of the car and sniff."

"Remarkable," said the Colonel. "Particularly since he will have changed his clothes at least three times since leaving London."

"We found a wireless set in the car," said one of the men.

"I see," said the Colonel. "That opens up an interesting field of speculation." He turned to Nichol. "*What* are you carrying that you had on you, *when you left London*?"

Nichol said slowly, "Fountain pen, silver pencil, notecase, wristwatch, and signet ring."

He hoped that the cigarette lighter, which he dropped as they got out of the car, had fallen into an inconspicuous place.

"The details are not important," said the Colonel. "We shall be able to work them all out when we get you, and Mr. Behrens, and the contents of his car, safely into our own territory."

He turned to the security men and said, "One stays here. One to go and check the arrangements for the crossing. We are using the normal route. Hurry."

The man nearest the door turned and went out.

Shura spoke for the first time. "I hope, Colonel, that you do not blame me for this. I should, perhaps, have thought that some electrical device might be used."

There was a pleading note in her voice that Nichol had never heard before; he had not imagined that such a girl could ever be humble.

The Colonel said, "No, Shura. I don't think anyone could blame you too much. Indeed, you did well to take notice of the Saab, and call Herr Bauer's attention to it."

The girl actually blushed.

"Thank you," she said . . .

Mr. Behrens, standing against the far wall of the hut where the guard had left him, considered the position. Even now that one

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of the guards had departed it was almost entirely unsatisfactory. Colonel Tyschenko was carrying a Vostok MU-2 pistol in a shoulder holster. He could see the light wooden butt as the Colonel leaned forward to speak to Shura. The guard had a German-type Schmeisser machine pistol across his shoulders, carried in such a way that he could swing it round to the front and fire without unslinging it. The girl had a gun, but it was probably in her shoulder satchel on the table. He and Nichol were unarmed.

The door handle turned very gently, round, and back again.

Mr. Behrens took a deep breath, and let it out slowly. He was not fond of violence.

He said, "If you don't mind, I have to go outside for a moment."

Colonel Tyschenko looked at him, then said, "Of course. But I should warn you that this man can put a burst of six shots into a moving target at fifty yards."

"I wasn't thinking of making a dash for it," said Mr. Behrens, sourly. He started towards the door. The Colonel signalled to the guard, who slipped back the bolt of the door and swung his gun round to the ready.

Mr. Behrens did not hurry. He wanted to be in one particular spot, next to the girl. The guard put a hand on the handle of the door and turned it. The door came open fast, as if kicked, and Rasselas came through in a smooth golden curve, his teeth bared, making straight for Colonel Tyschenko's throat.

Behind the dog waddled the squat figure of Mr. Calder. He shot the guard twice, at close quarters, through the chest, before he could get his hand to the trigger of his own gun.

The Colonel twisted as Rasselas struck him, and the dog catapulted over his shoulder, on to the floor. In the same moment, the Colonel picked out his Vostok and shot Nichol, who was jumping at him, through the right side of the body.

Rasselas buried his teeth in the Colonel's leg.

Mr. Behrens had wrapped his arms round Shura from behind. It was a temporary advantage only. She was twice as strong as he, and better trained. She prised apart his fingers, grabbed his forearm, and threw him across her outstretched leg. Then she stooped to grab her satchel, which Mr. Behrens had managed to knock on to the floor.

Mr. Calder crouched, steadied himself, and shot Colonel Tyschenko. The bullet went through the Colonel's mouth, and out at the back of his head. As he fell, his Vostok dropped within a few inches of Nichol's hand. He rolled over and picked it up.

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Shura's hand was already inside her satchel, when Nichol shot her. He was lying on the ground, and the bullet went upwards, through her chest, and into the top of her spine. The impact lifted her on to her toes. For a moment she looked as though she was poised for a dive. Then her knees buckled. As she fell, she struck the edge of the table, and slid off it. She was dead before she hit the floor beside Nichol.

After the last shot, there was a moment of complete silence.

Rasselas crouched over the Colonel's body, motionless except for the angry twitching of his tail. The smell of the blood had excited him. His ancestors had hunted wolves, and had fed on their entrails.

Mr. Behrens was the first to move. He groped for his glasses, put them on, and climbed to his feet. He said, "We've got precious little time. That other guard will be here any moment."

"He won't be coming back," said Mr. Calder. He was breathing heavily, as though the death he had dealt out had been a physical exertion. "I can promise you that."

"In that case—" said Mr. Behrens.

"In that case," said Mr. Calder, "we've still got a hell of a lot to do. And the fact that we've now got all night to do it in doesn't make it any easier. I think the bodies will have to be buried."

"Yes," said Mr. Behrens.

"It's sandy soil, and we've spades in the car. We shall have to put them four feet down."

"Yes," said Mr. Behrens again. It would mean hours of digging. But he could see the sense in it. It was the rule. If you made a mess, you cleared it up. But there was more to it than that. If Colonel Tyschenko, his courier, and his two personal bodyguards disappeared, the first idea would be that they had defected. And the mere suspicion of this would cause their opponents the maximum of trouble and uncertainty.

"Any blood there is, is on the matting. We'll bury that with them. We can use the girl's car for transport. After that I'll drive it off and leave it in the thickest part of the forest. This isn't a part of the world where intruders are encouraged. It could stand there until it falls to pieces."

"There's one other thing," said Mr. Behrens. "We ought to get Nichol to a doctor before morning. The nearest one I know of, who won't ask a lot of questions, is a hundred miles away."

Mr. Calder considered the problem.

He said, "Give me a hand with the first part, getting the bodies moved. Then leave me to do the rest."

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"Will you be able to finish before the morning?"

"Almost certainly not. But I can lie up by day, and finish the job tomorrow night. I'll see you in Cologne, at our usual place, the day after tomorrow."

And so, at four o'clock that morning, Mr. Behrens was driving his car once more. His head was singing with the Benzedrine he had inhaled, to keep himself awake. Beside him, Nichol was propped in the passenger seat. He had been delirious for some time and was now dozing. Mr. Behrens could only pray that they were not stopped. They would neither of them stand up to much inspection. And unless he could get Nichol into a doctor's hands in time to save his life, they were going to lose half the results of their efforts.

The continental side of *Route M* they now knew about and could deal with. But the English side—how it worked, who operated it—that was all locked away inside the white face and under the tangled head of black hair that lolled on the seat beside him.

A red light sprang out of the night. Mr. Behrens cursed, and slowed. But it was only the warning light for a level-crossing gate on the main line from Cologne to Basle.

Mr. Behrens coasted up to the barrier and switched off the engine. Nichol turned his head, and looked at him. The sudden silence and cessation of movement had woken him.

"Where are we?" he said.

"Nearly there," said Mr. Behrens.

"There's something," said Nichol, "that I ought to tell you."

"Don't talk more than you must," said Mr. Behrens.

Nichol hardly seemed to hear him. His body was in the present, but his mind was in the past. He went on, in a conversational voice.

"Last night, at that hotel, I made love to Shura. She seemed to want it. It was the most wonderful thing I have ever done. It was the first time in my life. I've been rather strictly brought up. You appreciate that. I'd never imagined it could be such a perfect thing. And then I shot her. I had to shoot her." He sounded serious, and puzzled. "That can't be right, you know."

"In this job," said Mr. Behrens, "there is neither right nor wrong. Only expediency."

The night express thundered past, and the gates rose and Mr. Behrens engaged gear, and drove on.

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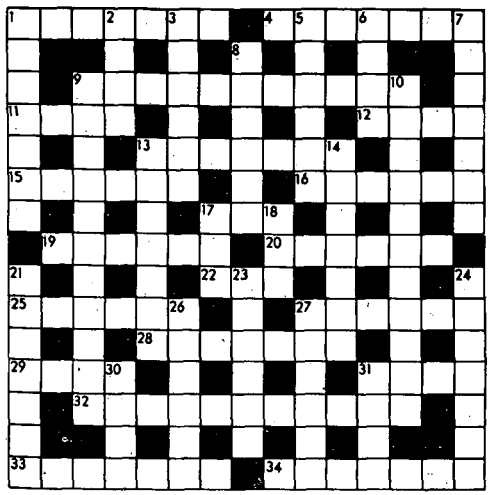
ARGOSY CROSSWORD

Solution on page 37



ACROSS

1 Hungarian stew, so laugh if you like! (7).

4 Opposed to Turkish leader this month? (7).

9 Highlight, of course, for ships (11).

11 Dickens' little girl (4).

12 English race, of course! (4).

13 Farmer finds seeds on worker (7).

15 He often deals with leaders (6).

16 Shylock thought Portia was (6).

17 Use strand of rope (3).

19 Calypso's island is in philology giant (6).

20 That Hun! (6).

22 Silken material, perhaps? (3).

25 More than offence taken in this card game (6).

27 Correctly, a just claim (6).

28 Flavours and 3 down is one of them (7).

29 Break up card game for capture (4).

31 Arts upset Russian ruler (4).

32 It's money for nothing on board (4,7).

33 Ingrams supplies borders (7).

34 Jack who climbs (7).

DOWN

1 Enraged nobleman (7).

2 During the interval compose part of a cradle song (4).

3 Adder before the fall (6).

5 Earth worn down (6).

6 Stage villain (4).

7 National emblem (7).

8 It's geological, old thing! (6).

9 Plane clothes policemen? (6,5).

10 Saint expert (11).

13 Perch having quiet revels? (7).

14 At least three sailors are Cossacks and Turks (7).

17 Less than bogey (3).

18 Zigzag on the way up (3).

21 Short poem about two farm animals? (7).

23 Classify returns from the Trossachs (6).

24 Theatre round or for preservation (7).

26 Achilles' is a bit of a heel! (6).

27 Nation supplying oil (6).

30 S. African hill (4).

31 Quakers used to say it for you (4).

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